

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM



Class BV 811

Book M 63

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

THE
FUNDAMENTAL ERROR
OF CHRISTENDOM

BY

W. T. MOORE

Πάντα δοκιμάζετε· τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε.—1 THESS. V, 21.

THE LIBRARY

OF THE
CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

ST. LOUIS
CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

F. 11
.M63

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
THIS BOOK RECEIVED
OCT. 27 1902
COPYRIGHT ENTRY
Oct. 27, 1902
CLASS α YXc No.
44566
COPY 3

Copyright, 1902, by
CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY.

PREFACE.

A PART of the matter in this volume appeared in the *Christian Quarterly* while I was the editor of that periodical. I have frequently been urged to put this matter into convenient and permanent form so that it might be available for popular use. In endeavoring to do this I found it necessary to add much that is new, and also to revise and re-arrange what had already been written; so that the whole argument, as now presented, may be regarded as practically a fresh and reasonably exhaustive statement of the case. Of course much more might be said on particular points; but fullness in detail has been sacrificed in the interest of brevity, which, in these days of high living and low thinking is of the utmost importance.

It is believed that the argument, in many respects, is somewhat unique, and that it really presents, in a small compass, a satisfactory solution of the baptismal question. This has been the chief aim in every sentence that has been written. The subject discussed is evi-

PREFACE

dently not understood by the people generally, and even some theologians do not seem to have a clear conception of much that is involved. I have been especially impressed with the uncertainty that reigns within the region of the baptismal controversy since I began work in the *Bible College of Missouri*, where I have come in contact with a large number of earnest young men who are seeking more light with respect to the teaching of the Bible on Baptism and other kindred questions. I have been made to feel that some such work as is now given to the public is greatly needed, and, consequently, I have been impelled to the task of making a contribution to a better understanding of the whole subject. It is hoped, therefore, that this volume will be not altogether unfruitful in throwing light upon the dark places, and in bringing order out of confusion.

No attempt has been made to rely upon human authority; nevertheless, a few important testimonies have been introduced, and these from writers, for the most part, not usually quoted in discussions with respect to baptism. The quotations made are chiefly from modern writers, and are all the more valuable

PREFACE

on that account, because they give us the last word that has been said from the Pedobaptist point of view, as nearly all the quotations are from Pedobaptist advocates.

This fact suggests a curious state of things. Is it not remarkable that the advocates of infant sprinkling are compelled to make such admissions as have been quoted in this volume? Surely no cause can hope to stand when its advocates are forced to concede so much that is directly against it.

No apology need be offered for discussing the baptismal question at this time. Baptism has always been a prominent factor in the Christian religion. It has lost nothing of its primitive importance. Nor is it likely to diminish in importance in the future. Like Banquo's ghost, it will not down. Why should it? Is not the command to baptize the nations clearly indicated in the great commission which Christ gave to his apostles? Did not these apostles administer baptism to all their converts during all the days of the early Church? Do not the letters of the apostles abundantly show that baptism in some way was intimately connected with allegiance to Christ and initiation into the Church? Indeed, it might be asked, is not the

PREFACE

whole history of Christianity, from its beginning down to the present time, deeply tinged with the baptismal coloring, no matter from what point of view the question may be considered?

It is not strange, therefore, that the question of baptism should still have an abiding interest for those who reverence the teaching of the Scriptures and the unbroken testimony of the Christian Church since its foundation. It is, however, of the very first importance that baptism should be assigned its proper place, and not perverted to uses for which there is no authority in either reason or revelation. It has been my purpose, therefore, in what follows to seek to find just what the correct position of baptism is; but while doing this, it has been necessary, first of all, to consider the rise and progress of one of the most fatal errors which have ever found their way into the sphere of religious faith. I refer to the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

The position which has seemed to me to be the most reasonable is that which lies between the two extremes of Baptismal Regeneration and a baptism which practically amounts to nothing. In stating and defending this view

PREFACE

of the matter, the appeal has been made to the Bible and common sense; and while the conclusion reached will probably not please the extremes of any school, it is hoped that reasonable people will be convinced that the position which I have indicated is the only safe one to occupy. Believing, as I do, that the baptismal question must be settled before Christian union is possible, and believing, furthermore, that Christian union must be realized before the conversion of the world can ever be assured, it is easy to understand how deeply concerned I must be with respect to an irenicon on the baptismal question. In the following pages I have endeavored to deal with the question broadly and charitably, but, at the same time, I have not hesitated to call a spade a spade.

June 1, 1902.

W. T. M.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	3

CHAPTER I.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION	13
---	----

Meaning of the term Regeneration—An appeal to the Scriptures—Meaning in Matthew and in Titus—Westminster Confession definition—The doctrine of original sin—Hillary and Ambrose—Teaching of Lutheran symbols—Dr. Hodge's view—Diversity of views as regards Baptismal Regeneration—Roman Catholic view—High Church party—View of Nonconformists—Nineteen-twentieths of Christendom hold to Baptismal Regeneration in some form—Origin of the heresy—The trinity of evil.

CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN OF INFANT BAPTISM	29
------------------------------------	----

Mr. Spurgeon's saying—Teaching of Irenæus—Neander's statement—Dr. Newman's account of the origin—Augustine's view—John Wesley in doctrinal tracts—The true origin of infant baptism is to be found in Baptismal Regeneration.

CHAPTER III.

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM	36
-----------------------------------	----

The family idea—A fatal admission—Immersion the almost universal practice till the twentieth century—The civilized world has decided against it—"The general sentiment of Christian liberty" has triumphed—The change from immersion to sprinkling greater than administering the Lord's Supper with the bread without the wine—Summary of the dean's view—What he says about the practice of infant baptism—Does not claim for it apostolic authority—Founds it in the family relation—Three reasons for its origin—Henry Ward Beecher on infant baptism—Do Protestants honor the Word of God?—The modern theory—A trilemma—Martin Luther's view.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM	55

It is unscriptural—Views of distinguished Pedobaptists—Dr. Joseph Agar Beet—Dr. Augustus Neander—An apostolic tradition in the third century—Did not originate with Christ—Dr. William Cunningham says the general tenor of Scripture language applies to adults—The practice unreasonable—We should not needlessly antagonize the scientific spirit of the age—Prof. Harnack on mysteries and charms—The mystery of the sacraments by Dr. Martensen—Close relation between baptism and Lord's Supper—The church of North Africa first brought prominently into notice infant baptism—Infant communion—An irenicon proposed by Dr. Van Oosterzee—Infant baptism unnecessary—Infants do not need it—Parents still fear their children will be lost—Children respect the action of their parents—The practice perpetuated by love of parents for children and love of children for parents—Still rests on the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

CHAPTER V.

SUMMING UP THE CASE	71
-------------------------------	----

Infant Baptism an inheritance—The only thing that can overthrow is Christ's authority—The effects of the practice—Seven evils—Must be surrendered—Tradition must not be allowed to take place of Scripture—A canon of Christianity necessary—The Apostolic Church the original form of Christian life—Reformers did not reform sufficiently—Tradition must be abandoned.

CHAPTER VI.

SACERDOTALISM	85
-------------------------	----

A child of Baptismal Regeneration—A departure of the Church of the second and third centuries not confined to infant baptism—Testimony of Dr. Henry Newman and Principal Fairbairn—How related to Apostolic succession—"Spiritual Excisemen"—The remedy—Summary of evils of sacerdotalism—A more excellent way—Church government in primitive church simple—Service, not rule, the characteristic of Christian honor—Christianity's prime solicitude not knowledge, but worship.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
THE REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION	99

John iii.5 relied upon to teach Baptismal Regeneration—Meaning of the passage—Baptism in Spirit does not exclude baptism in water—The two elements united in the “One baptism” of Paul—Meaning of the “Kingdom of God”—Three things apparent—Christ baptizes in Holy Spirit; baptism in water administered by John; no such thing as “Spirit baptism,” or “water baptism”—Language of Ashdod—Peter at Pentecost in harmony with John iii. 5—Baptism in Holy Spirit probably belongs to every baptism—Scriptural teaching harmonious.

CHAPTER VIII.

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM	111
--	-----

Ritual holds important place in the Divine government—Difficulty of making a perfect revelation—Antiquity of ritual—Abuse no good reason against use—Easily perverted—The old distinction between moral and positive duties cannot be maintained—God does not command what is not right in itself—The old notion fosters a false notion of baptism—Baptism not simply a test of faith—Reasonable and appropriate—Therefore not contrary to reason—This view will help to overthrow infant baptism—Making too little of baptism—Extremes beget extremes—Baptism saves in *some* sense—Safety in the middle course.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION	130
-------------------------------------	-----

Three ways in which to solve the question—Baptism as a covenant, as a decision, or as simply a command to be obeyed—The way to Christian union—No need for hair-splitting—Summing up the case—Seven evil consequences resulting from indifference—Danger of being misunderstood—Making *too little* of baptism as dangerous as making too much of it—The right view makes Baptismal Regeneration impossible.

CHAPTER X.

MODERN TESTIMONIES CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM	138
---	-----

Many theologians who reject Baptismal Regeneration connect

CONTENTS

	PAGE
baptism with salvation—Alexander Campbell's position—Baptism without faith is of no value—Dr. Beet's view—New Testament cases considered—Rev. F. W. Robertson's testimony—Baptism something to rest upon—The marriage ceremony—The coronation of a sovereign—Authoritativeness is the all in all of baptism.	

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?	149
--------------------------------------	-----

Scriptures say much about baptism—In some sense a saving ordinance—Did Paul baptize?—Were the Gentile Christians baptized?—Arguments in the case—The apostles went out in twos.

CHAPTER XII.

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS	158
---------------------------------	-----

I. Peter iii. 21, examined critically, exegetically and practically—The Scriptural significance of baptism—Baptism a transitional act—Who are children of God?—What is meant by Fatherhood—Sonship is ethical and cannot, therefore, be universal—John i. 11, 12—We do not become what we already are—Man is the creature of God—Must not confine our investigation to the family idea, our new state set forth under various figures—Baptism is in the name of Jesus—The name the power—The phrase, "Remission of sins," considered—Acts ii. 38 and Acts x. 43 harmonized—"Upon the name" emphasizes the name rather than the baptism—Baptism the keystone—Joined to twelve other things—Does not stand for simply one thing—The popular mistake—Salvation ascribed to several things—Divine and human side—Scriptures harmonized—Must not rest too much in definition—Loyalty to Christ the main matter.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM.

CHAPTER I.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION.

As the proposition to be proved in this volume is that Baptismal Regeneration is the Fundamental Error of Christendom, it is important at the beginning of the discussion to inquire: What is the meaning of the term *Regeneration*? Correct definition is the sword which often cuts the Gordian knot of theology. Our controversies are not infrequently little more than logomachies. We quarrel about words, and generally for the reason that we attach different meanings to them. Consequently, in order to unity with respect to almost anything, the first great need of our time is to agree as to the meaning of the terms which we use. This is especially true of theological terms. In these days we hear much said against the distracting influence of theology, and there is certainly good ground for what we hear. Doubtless there is considerable reason for the growing tendency to regard scholastic speculations as of

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

no particular value in the affairs of life. But, after all, it is more than probable that the greatest evil of theology comes from a failure of the schools to agree upon a terminology which every one may understand. At present theological terms are used with so much difference in their meaning that it is next to impossible to thread our way through the labyrinths of definition to anything like a common understanding, in which all Christians may practically agree.

Let us appeal to the Scriptures for help with respect to a clear definition of Regeneration. It is interesting to note the fact that this word occurs only twice in the New Testament. First in Matt. 19:28: "Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The second occurrence is in Tit. 3:5: "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Now, it is probable that in both of these instances the reference is to a new state or kingdom; for what Matthew calls the "Regeneration," Luke calls a "Kingdom" (Luke 28:30). The idea seems to be that Jesus is looking for-

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

ward to the establishment of his kingdom when the apostles will become his administrators on earth, and whatsoever they bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This public administration of Christ's kingdom began on the day of Pentecost, at which time the law of admission into the kingdom was clearly announced, and at the same time about three thousand souls were added to the company of believers.

The meaning in Titus is not necessarily different from what it is in Matthew. If we substitute the word "Kingdom" for "Regeneration," we shall then have "the washing of the Kingdom"; and as this phrase implies that the "washing" is something which belongs to the Kingdom, we may reasonably infer that when the phrase is stripped of all metaphor it simply means the Baptism of the new Institution, or the Kingdom which was set up on the day of Pentecost.

This, doubtless, is the truly scriptural meaning of the Greek *palingenesia*. There is, however, another term which has been thought to be equivalent to *palingenesia*. That term is *anagennasas*, from *anagennao*, "to beget or bring forth again, Regenerate," etc. However, it is by no means certain that *anagennasas*

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

is equivalent to *palingenesis*; and the confounding of these two words may partially account for the confusion which has prevailed in theological controversy with respect to the whole subject of Regeneration. In any case, it is evident that the confusion has been widespread, and even at present there is no well defined, acceptable view as to the real meaning of Regeneration. However, it is probable that the definition of the Westminster Confession of Faith is the one which is most generally accepted by theologians, although it is not certain that what the Confession says is clearly understood by any one. Undoubtedly the popular use of Regeneration implies the implantation of a new nature; a change by which holy affections and purposes are substituted for the opposite motives in the heart; and it is in this sense that the term will be used in what follows, although it is probable that this does not express the true scriptural idea. Nevertheless, as we are dealing with a popular error, we must accept the popular interpretation of terms.

However, as an illustration of the confusion which has been produced by the want of a uniform, clearly defined terminology, it is only necessary to call attention to the bitter controversies which have been waged with respect to the doctrine of *Regeneration*. It is not my

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

purpose at present to even attempt to consider the numerous phases of the discussions concerning the meaning of this term. A volume might be written upon this single word, and even then the subject would not be exhausted. Indeed, it is not at all improbable that the true scriptural meaning of the word has not been clearly set forth in any of the theological works which are usually accepted as standards. Still, it will answer the present purpose, if the reader can be made to clearly understand the difference between what is popularly called the evangelical doctrine of Regeneration and what has been known in Church history as Baptismal Regeneration. In its proper place we may have something to say as regards a reconstruction of terminology on this whole question.

THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.

Early in the history of the Christian Church the doctrine of Original Sin came prominently into view. The influence of this doctrine was soon felt upon the controversy in reference to Baptismal Regeneration. However, the doctrine as it is now understood did not find very general acceptance until the third century, when such writers as Tertullian, Cyprian and others soon reduced it to a distinct formula. In reference to Original Sin, St. Cyprian says:

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

“The infant has committed no sin. He has only contracted the contagion of death from his progenitor, and hence remission of sin is more easy in his case, because it is not his own, but another’s sin, that is remitted to him.”

Hillary and Ambrose, the two most distinguished Latin theologians of the fourth century, emphasize the doctrine of a *sinful* as distinguished from a corrupt nature still more distinctly than either Tertullian or Cyprian did.

The following quotations from Ambrose will indicate his general view of Original Sin and of the Adamic connection: “Adam existed (*fuit*), and we all existed in him; Adam perished, and all perished in him.” “We all sinned in the first man, and by the succession of nature the succession of guilt (*culpæ*) was transferred from one to all.” “Before we are born we are stained with contagion, and before we see the light we receive the injury of the original transgression.” “‘In whom all sinned.’ Thus it is evident that all sinned in Adam, as if in a mass; for having corrupted by sin those whom he begat, all are born under sin. Wherefore we all are sinners from him (*ex eo*), because we are all from him.”

In these statements we have the germ of the Augustinian Anthropology, which became dominant about the beginning of the fifth century;

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

while this anthropology was afterwards restated and enforced by the remarkable logical powers of John Calvin, whose views have distinctly marked and influenced almost every feature of Protestantism in all its various forms.

The Lutheran symbols very generally include conversion in the doctrine of Regeneration, while the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism emphasize the fact that regeneration is wholly a divine act. Dr. Hodge is perhaps the ablest exponent of this special view of regeneration. In his *Systematic Theology* he says: "Regeneration is an act of God. It is not simply referred to him as its Giver, and, in that sense, its Author, as he is the Giver of faith and of repentance. It is not an act which, by argument and persuasion, or by moral power, he induces the sinner to perform. But it is an act of which he is the Agent. It is God who regenerates. The soul is regenerated. In this sense the soul is passive in regeneration, which (subjectively considered) is a change wrought in us, and not an act performed by us." But Dr. Hodge goes still further than this. He says that "Regeneration is not only an act of God, but also an act of his almighty power. Raising Lazarus from the dead was an act of omnipotence. Nothing intervened between the volition and the effect.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

The act of quickening was the act of God. In that matter Lazarus was passive. But in all the acts of restored vitality he was active and free. According to the evangelical system, it is in this sense that regeneration is the act of God's almighty power." This is practically a re-statement of Augustinianism, or its modern representative, Calvinism; but it constitutes the warp and woof of what is to-day, for the most part, the acknowledged teaching of evangelicals concerning regeneration.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

As regards the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, there is a wide diversity of views. Even Church of England writers differ very greatly as to what is meant by the doctrine. It is well known that the High Church, or Ritualistic wing of the Establishment, holds practically the view of the Church of Rome in its leading characteristics. Many, therefore, accept the definition of regeneration as given by the Council of Trent; and that Council declared that "baptism takes away not only guilt, but everything of the nature of sin, and communicates a new life." Indeed, that Council declared baptism to be "the sacrament of faith, without which no one could be justified," or regenerated. Hence, the doctrine of the

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

Roman Catholic Church is that regeneration includes (1) the removal of the guilt of sin; (2) the cleansing away of inherent moral corruption; (3) the infusion of new habits of grace, and (4) adoption, or recognition of the renewed as sons of God. Now when we remember that the Council of Trent taught that this regeneration is effected by baptism, it is easy to see to what dangerous extremes the doctrine of baptism has been pressed, and consequently how very earnest our protest should be against that wing of the Established Church which so persistently contends for what is practically nothing better than Roman Catholicism.

Nevertheless, the High Church Party, or the Tractarian, as they are called, have almost out-Heroded Herod in their plea for "sacramental grace," and especially for Baptismal Regeneration. That this is not over-stating the case, the following extracts from J. H. Newman's *Lectures on Justification* abundantly prove: "The sacraments," he says, "are the immediate, faith is the secondary, subordinate, or representative instrument of justification." "Faith, being the appointed representative of baptism, derives its authority and virtue from that which it represents. It is justifying because of baptism; it is the faith of the baptized, of the regenerate; that is, of the justified. Jus-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

tifying faith does not precede justification; but justification precedes faith, and makes it justifying. And here lies the cardinal mistake of the views on the subject which are now esteemed evangelical. They make faith the sole instrument, not after baptism, but before, whereas baptism is the primary instrument, and makes faith to be what it is, and otherwise is not."

This extract expresses with clearness the view generally held by that portion of the Church of England known as the High Church Party. Dr. Newman wrote this several years before he joined the Roman Catholic Church. The essential idea of this Popish and Tractarian doctrine of the sacraments is, in the language of Dr. Cunningham, "that God has established an invariable connection between external ordinances and the communication of himself—the possession by men of spiritual blessing, pardon and holiness; with this further notion, which naturally results from it, that he has endowed these outward ordinances with some sort of power or capacity of conveying or conferring the blessing with which they are respectively connected. It is a necessary result of this principle, that the want of the outward ordinance—not the neglect or contempt of it, but the mere want of it, from whatever cause arising—de-

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

prives men of the spiritual blessings which it is said to confer.”

Dr. Hook, Vicar of Leeds, England, in his *Church Dictionary*, distinguishes between conversion and regeneration; but, after all, he teaches simply a modified form of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. Other Churchmen hold that regeneration expresses an external change of relation, and not an internal change of the state of the soul, in its relation to God. Regeneration, in this outward sense, is declared to be by baptism, while the inner change is wrought by the Holy Spirit. There are also, as is well known, not a few Churchmen who hold to what has been stated to be the evangelical view.

Associated with these may be reckoned most of the Nonconformist bodies. It is true that some of these, being Arminians in their theology, differ somewhat from Dr. Hodge and others who are Calvinists. At the same time a large majority of Dissenters utterly reject the doctrine of the Church of Rome that baptism has the effect of “imprinting a character upon the soul that is supernatural and spiritual”; and that, furthermore, it “carries along with it such a divine virtue that by the very receiving of it the virtue is conveyed to the souls of them to whom it is applied.” In other words, Non-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

conformists, for the most part, utterly reject the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, as that doctrine is popularly known in Church history.

But this protest is feeble compared with the widespread influence of the error under consideration. A large majority of Christendom unquestionably hold to some form of Baptismal Regeneration. We have already seen that it is a cardinal doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. It is also equally fundamental in the Greek Church, while the Established Protestant Churches of Continental Europe may generally be ranked in this respect with the Latins and the Greeks. And when we add to these a majority of the Anglican Church, with scattering Nonconformists to be found in all their communions, it will at once be seen that not less than nineteen-twentieths of the whole of Christendom are to-day teaching and practicing the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. This is surely an appalling fact; and it is a fact, too, which must be earnestly reckoned with in any honest consideration of the elements which enter into the religious progress of the world.

THE ORIGIN OF THE HERESY.

And yet it is not very difficult to see how this heresy had its origin. Whoever has read carefully the New Testament, with the view of

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

studying the relation between baptism and the sinner, will scarcely have failed to notice how intimate this relation is. In such passages as the following there can be no mistake about the connection between baptism and the remission of sins: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," *i. e.*, pardoned; "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit;" "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord;" "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us," etc., etc. We could extend the list of similar passages very much further, but we have quoted sufficient to show how easily, in the first place, the Patristic writers, and, in the second place, even the writers of modern times, evolved the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. By losing sight of the proper antecedents of baptism, *viz.*, faith and repentance, and by fixing attention mainly upon the ordinance which marked the consummation of the sinner's return to God, it was not a difficult thing to reach the conclusion that baptism itself, *ex opere operato*, effected a change of heart, or a change from the love of sin to the love of holiness; or, in other words, produced what is now regarded by evangelicals as Regen-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

eration; and, furthermore, it can scarcely be doubted that there is ample reason for regarding what was evolved in this great transformation as a most pernicious evil.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY.

It is well known that at a very early period in the history of Christianity, Baptism and Regeneration were used as equivalent terms. Baptism was also called *indulgentia*, or indulgence, or absolution. By some writers it was called *salus*, salvation, because it was alleged to be "the means not only of obtaining remission of sins, but of bringing men by the grace and blood of Christ to the glory of the kingdom of heaven." And, finally, it was called a "sacrament," the "seal of the Lord," "the royal mark of character," the "character of the Lord." In all of which names and phrases there is a distinct recognition of a Divine connection between baptism and the remission of sins. It would be easy enough to give numerous quotations from the most distinguished writers of all ages of the Church in support of the statements here made, but as these statements are not likely to be disputed by any one whose judgment is worth considering, it is not deemed necessary to burden these pages with such quotations. Suffice it to say that, from Bar-

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REGENERATION

nabas down to the Council of Nice, and from Nice to Augsburg, nearly all the Christian writers agree in describing a most intimate relationship between baptism and remission of sins. Indeed, it is quite true, as Hagenbach has said, that "from the earliest times great importance was attached to the doctrine of Baptism, because of its supposed relation to the forgiveness of sins." We have already seen that this notion was founded upon certain Scripture texts, and that by carrying the notion too far the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration was evolved. And in view of the widespread and baneful influence of that doctrine, we are quite justified in calling it the Fundamental Error of Christendom.

And now, in order to understand some of the disastrous consequences of Baptismal Regeneration, it may be well to notice a few of the great evils which have grown out of it. At present only three of these will be noticed specifically, though these will be quite sufficient, as nearly all the evils of Christendom are in some way associated with *Sacramentarianism*, *Sacerdotalism* and *Indifferentism*. These three "isms," from a religious point of view, can be regarded as constituting what may be not inappropriately called the *Trinity of Evil*. Hence, *Infant Baptism*, *Priestcraft* and *Indifference to Divine*

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

Authority properly belong to that hydra-headed monster known in Church history as the Great Apostasy, and which has so long committed such fearful ravages throughout the religious world.

CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN OF INFANT BAPTISM.

MR. SPURGEON once said that Baptismal Regeneration rode in on the shoulders of Infant Baptism, but it is evident from the facts of history that this statement is not correct. Indeed, it would be exactly true if Infant Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration were made to change places. It is simply certain that Infant Baptism rode in on the shoulders of Baptismal Regeneration. We have already seen how soon, in the history of the Christian religion, this doctrine was evolved. And when it is stated that the early writers nearly always connected baptism with the remission of what is known in theology as original sin, as well as personal sins, it is not difficult to see how Infant Baptism finally became a logical necessity. The first Christian writer who distinctly advocated Infant Baptism was Irenæus, and he testifies of the profound Christian idea out of which Infant Baptism arose. The idea is that "Christ came to redeem all by Himself—all who, through Him, are regenerated to God—infants, little children, boys, young men and old. Hence He passed through every age, and for infants He

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

became an Infant, sanctifying the infants; among the children He became a little Child, sanctifying those who belong to this age, and at the same time presenting to them an example of piety, of well-doing and of obedience." Commenting upon this statement of Irenæus, the great historian, Augustus Neander, says: "Infant Baptism, then, appears here as the medium through which the principle of sanctification, imparted by Christ to human nature from its earliest development, became appropriated to children. From this idea, founded on what is innermost in Christianity, becoming prominent in the feelings of Christians, resulted the practice of Infant Baptism."

But even this view did not make Infant Baptism absolutely necessary. It may have suggested its appropriateness, but Infant Baptism never would have become so general a practice had it not been that the family idea was immediately associated with original sin; and hence, in commenting upon the final outcome of the matter, Neander uses the following suggestive and emphatic language: "But when now, on the one hand, the doctrine of the corruption and guilt, cleaving to human nature in consequence of the first transgression, was reduced to a more precise and systematic form, and, on the other, from the want of duly distinguishing

ORIGIN OF INFANT BAPTISM

between what is outward and what is inward in baptism (the Baptism by water, and the Baptism by the Spirit), the error became more firmly established, *that without external baptism no one could be delivered from that inherent guilt, could be saved from the everlasting punishment that threatened him, or raised to eternal life; and when the notion of a magical influence, a charm connected with the sacraments, continually gained ground, the theory was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of Infant Baptism.*"

In confirmation of this view of the matter it may be well to quote from a recent very able work entitled, "A History of Anti-Pedobaptism," by Dr. Albert Henry Newman, Professor of Church History in McMaster University, Toronto, Canada. After stating the fact that "early in the second century, possibly during the last decade of the first, the idea came into vogue that while instruction on Christian truth and morals, repentance, faith, fasting and prayer must precede baptism, the remission of sins takes place only in connection with the baptismal act," Dr. Newman goes on to say:

"It is highly probable that the disposition to attach magical significance to baptism, and to surround its administration with mystery and ceremonial, came into the Church through the channel of Gnosticism; although, as is well known, Gnostic mysteries were themselves derived

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

from those that had long prevailed in pagan systems. We need only mention the elaborate initiatory rites of the Eleusinian, Pythagorean, Orphic and Delphian mysteries, of the old Egyptian priesthood, and of the Mithras worship. The fact is, there was a great fund of current thought and practice on this matter that was sure, sooner or later, to make its influence profoundly felt by Christianity.

* * * * *

“Side by side with the idea of the efficacy of water baptism had grown up the conviction that apart from baptism there is no salvation. The human race being intrinsically corrupt, the guilt of race-sin attaches to unconscious infants no less than to such as have reached moral consciousness. The only avenue of escape was baptism. Exception was made in the case of believers who suffered martyrdom before they had had an opportunity to wash away their sins in baptism; but these were said to have had a baptism of blood.

* * * * *

“When Christians had come to believe that water baptism possessed magical efficacy, and that all mankind was so involved in sin that no salvation was possible apart from baptism, it was inevitable that infant baptism should be introduced. The widespread prevalence of infant lustrations among pagans made the introduction of infant baptism easy and natural. At first it would be confined to infants in danger of death; but when the idea had taken firm hold on the Christian consciousness that it was a necessary means of securing cleansing from hereditary sin, its progress could not fail to be rapid.

“The universal prevalence of infant baptism was long prevented, however, by another error, for whose elevation to the position of a dogma Tertullian was chiefly responsible, but which no doubt had been more or less current since the middle of the second century. This error was, in effect, that mortal sins committed after baptism are irre-

ORIGIN OF INFANT BAPTISM

missible. It was chiefly on this ground that Tertullian so earnestly insisted on the postponement of baptism until such a degree of maturity and stability should have been reached as to warrant the expectation that the candidate would be able to guard himself from the commission of mortal sins. He had no doubt as to the efficacy of baptism to cleanse the unconscious infant of hereditary sin; but, on prudential grounds, he considered it important that this cleansing rite should be reserved until such time as he could have reasonable assurance that its efficacy would be permanent. From this time onward the choice between infant baptism and adult baptism was determined largely by the views of individuals as to whether the former or the latter would probably be the more advantageous. The baptized infant might, on the one hand, grow up and become involved in sin, and so lose the opportunity that adult baptism would confer of starting out on his personal Christian life with a clean score; on the other hand, the unbaptized infant might die by violence, or so unexpectedly as to be out of reach of the saving bath. The rigorous view of Tertullian as regards the unpardonableness of post-baptismal mortal sin gradually gave place to a more benignant view, and from the middle of the third century the Church made so ample provision for the restoration of the lapsed that infant baptism came to be generally regarded as the safer thing."

Here, then, we have unmistakably indicated the real origin of a practice which at one time became well-nigh universal, and is yet retained in all the Churches which still believe in Baptismal Regeneration, and also in a few which hold to the notion that was first propounded by Irenæus. But it is simply certain that infant baptism cannot be justified on any other ground

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

than that of Baptismal Regeneration. This is the ground on which the early Church placed it, and it is the only ground on which it can find any real justification. If, however, it is true, as Augustine has alleged, that "he who is not baptized cannot obtain salvation"; that "every one is born in sin, and stands, therefore, in need of pardon"; and that he "obtains this pardon by baptism," and that "it cleanses children from original sin," then it is easy to see that infant baptism is not only logical, but is a prime necessity, and ought to be universally adopted by the whole of Christendom. It is not strange, therefore, that some Protestant writers, even since the Lutheran Reformation, have practically held the same view as that maintained by the early Church and such theologians as St. Augustine. It is rather remarkable, however, that John Wesley, in his *Doctrinal Tracts*, should use such language as the following:

"By baptism, we who were 'by nature children of wrath,' *are made* the CHILDREN of God. And this regeneration which our Church in so many places ascribes to baptism is more than barely being admitted into the Church, though commonly connected therewith; being 'grafted into the body of Christ's Church, we are made the children of God by adoption and grace.' This is grounded on the plain words of our Lord, 'Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of

ORIGIN OF INFANT BAPTISM

God' (John 3:5). By water, then, as a *means*, the *water of baptism*, we are REGENERATED OR BORN AGAIN; where it is also called by the apostle, 'the washing of regeneration.' Our Church, therefore, ascribes no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done. Nor does she ascribe it to the outward washing, but to the inward grace which, added thereto, makes it a sacrament. Herein a principle of grace is infused, which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God by long continued wickedness."—*Doctrinal Tracts*, pp. 248, 249.

These tracts of Wesley were circulated by the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States up to the year 1860, when that Church refused any longer to publish and indorse them as evangelical.

CHAPTER III.

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM.

NO DOUBT the family idea has had much to do with maintaining the practice of infant baptism even with those who do not associate it with the doctrine of Original Sin, or believe that baptism is ever connected with remission of sins. It is well known that the late Dean Stanley wrote an able essay just before his death in which he grounded the doctrine of Infant Baptism on this family idea.*

The Dean discusses both the action and subject of baptism, and it is certainly worth while to notice carefully what he says, especially as he writes in the interests of Pedobaptism. The Dean's candor is truly refreshing, and his ability to treat the subject in the most comprehensive and scholarly manner cannot be doubted. Indeed, his reasoning is so unlike that of many smaller minds—who seek to defend sprinkling on philological and scriptural grounds—that we feel half inclined to forgive the blunders he has made in view of his frankness and catholicity. His scholarship and position enabled him to

* October number of the *Nineteenth Century*, 1879.

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

speak as one having authority, and not as the scribes who write pretentious essays on the generic meaning of *baptizo*. The late Dean of Westminster does not hesitate to declare that immersion was the only form of baptism known in the apostolic Church, and that "for the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word 'baptize'—that those who were baptized were plunged, submerged, immersed into water."

After such an admission as this, the reader will be anxious to know how the distinguished Dean accounts for the fact that, "with few exceptions, the whole of the Western Churches have now substituted for the bath the ceremony of sprinkling a few drops of water on the face." Let the following extract from the Dean's article speak for him:

"The reason of the change is obvious. The practice of immersion, apostolic and primitive as it was, was peculiarly suitable to the Southern and Eastern countries for which it was designed, and peculiarly unsuitable to the tastes, and the convenience, and the feelings of the countries of the North and West. Not by any decree of Council or Parliament, but by the general sentiment of Christian liberty, this great change was effected. Not beginning till the thirteenth century, it has driven the ancient Catholic usage out of the whole of Europe. There is no one who would now wish to go back to the old practice.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

It had, no doubt, the sanction of the apostles and of their Master. It had the sanction of the venerable Churches of the early ages, and of the sacred countries of the East. Baptism by sprinkling was rejected by the ancient Church (except in the rare case of death-beds or extreme necessity) as no baptism at all. Almost the first exception was the heretic Novatian. It still has the sanction of the powerful religious community which numbers amongst its members such noble characters as John Bunyan, Robert Hall, and Havelock. In a version of the Bible which the Baptist Church has compiled for its own use in America, where it excels in number all but the Methodist, it is thought necessary (and on philological grounds it is quite correct) to translate John the Baptist by John the Immerser. It has been defended on sanitary grounds. Sir John Floyer dated the prevalence of consumption to the discontinuance of the baptism by immersion. But speaking generally, the Christian civilized world has decided against it. It is a striking example of the triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom."

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the fact that this reasoning clearly contradicts the statement which the Dean makes concerning the prevalence of immersion in many of the Northern countries, such as when he says, "The cold climate of Russia has not been found an obstacle to its continuance throughout that vast empire." Nor need we point to the admission, which he makes in the first part of his article, that Christ, in selecting baptism, did so because it was "the most delightful, the most ordinary, the most salutary of social observ-

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

ances." It is certainly no fault of the Dean's ability or the elegance of his style that these antagonisms appear. The real difficulty, we think, is that "the general sentiment of Christian liberty"—whatever that may mean—finds itself in direct conflict with too many stubborn facts to allow the Dean's theory to pass unchallenged.

But it is not with these contradictions that we are chiefly concerned. There is a much more serious view of the case. That serious view is presented in the fact that what was so wisely selected by Christ, so constantly practiced by the apostles, and so persistently adhered to by the Church for thirteen centuries, should at last be so generally "decided against" by the "Christian civilized world" as to practically substitute a different ordinance altogether for that which was commanded by Divine authority. Surely this fact raises the important question, whether we shall obey God or men, Christ and his apostles, or "the general sentiment of Christian liberty," as expressed in the decision of the "Christian civilized world"? In calling attention to this important matter we do not wish to be understood as insensible to the great value of a "triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom." In mere mat-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

* ters of expediency, we should doubtless go as far as Dean Stanley himself in consulting "tastes, convenience and feelings." But we are now dealing with a very different thing. Baptism is a Divine ordinance; a definite command, solemnly expressing a great fact, and cannot therefore be safely set aside and something else substituted for it without higher authority than "the general sentiment of Christian liberty," or the "triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom."

But should any one contend that the change from immersion to sprinkling is a small matter—a mere change of form—and not therefore to be regarded as seriously affecting what was divinely commanded, we beg such a one to ponder well Dean Stanley's estimate of this change. He says:

"It is a greater change even than that which the Roman Catholic Church has made in administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the bread without the wine. For that was a change which did not affect the thing that was signified; whereas the change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism, and has altered the very meaning of the word."

Surely such a change as is here indicated ought to cause "the Christian civilized world" to hesitate before it is finally adopted. That

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

which "sets aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism, and alters the very meaning of the word," cannot, I think, be regarded as simply a "triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom." It is, rather, no doubt, the abrogation of a Divine institution and the substitution for it that which is wholly human; and this being true, it is not strange that "the substitution of sprinkling for immersion," to use the Dean's own language, "must to many at the time, as to the Baptist now, have seemed the greatest and most dangerous innovation."

In order to present the whole case clearly before the mind of the reader, it may be well to summarize the chief points in the article we are reviewing. The following, I think, fairly represent the Dean's views:

1. Immersion was wisely selected, not only because it was "a most delightful, ordinary and salutary observance," but because it was significantly expressive of the design of baptism.
2. The word which Christ used to express baptism is literally translated by immersion.
3. Christ himself was immersed.
4. The apostles uniformly practiced immersion.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

5. Immersion was the invariable practice of the Primitive Church.

6. It was the almost universal practice of Christians for the first thirteen centuries.

7. When the substitution of sprinkling for immersion began to find favor it was stoutly resisted as an innovation.

8. Even in some of the cold countries (Russia for instance) the innovation has been, up to the present time, successfully resisted.

9. Immersion, "even in the Church of England, is still observed in theory. Elizabeth and Edward VI. were both immersed. The Rubric in the Public Baptism for Infants enjoins that, unless for special cases, they are to be dipped, not sprinkled."

10. The change from immersion to sprinkling is greater than that which the Roman Catholic Church has made in administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the bread without the wine.

And now, in the face of all these facts and admissions, we are called upon to be reconciled to this great change in supreme deference to "the general sentiment of Christian liberty" which, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, was so powerful as to practically set aside "the oldest ceremonial ordinance that Christianity possesses" by adopting a ceremony

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

more "congenial" to the "customs of regions and climates" where immersion was thought to be not so "suitable" or so "convenient." Undoubtedly the Dean is right in saying that all this "shows how the spirit which lives and moves in human society can override even the most sacred ordinances." But before we commit ourselves to this daring innovation, we should certainly pause and ask, by what authority are we justified in making so great a change? Do we follow the Divine or human? Christ or men? the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or "the spirit which lives and moves in human society"?

The transition from the *action* of baptism to the *subject* is not difficult. What the Dean has said with respect to the change from immersion to sprinkling has prepared us for the change which took place as to the proper subject of baptism. We shall no doubt find the later change produced by practically the same conditions as those which brought about the change from immersion to sprinkling.

Candor is always a commendable virtue, but it is often a very dangerous witness. Hence, while no one, I think, can fail to respect Dean Stanley's admirable candor in treating the subject of Infant Baptism, it must at the same time appear to the most casual reader

that his honesty has led him to make admissions quite contrary to the notion that infant baptism is of Divine origin. Of course it is well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the baptismal controversy, that many Pedobaptists have conceded as much as the distinguished Dean of Westminster; and yet it would be difficult, perhaps, to find a clearer statement of the exact truth in the matter than is presented in the following extract from the Dean's article. After speaking of the change from immersion to sprinkling, he says:

"Another change is not so complete, but is perhaps more important. In the Apostolic Age, and in the three centuries which followed, it is evident that, as a general rule, those who came to baptism came in full age, of their own deliberate choice. We find a few cases of baptism of children; in the third century we find one case of the baptism of infants. Even amongst Christian households the instances of Chrysostom, Gregory, Nazianzen, Basil, Ephrem of Edessa, Augustine, Ambrose, are decisive proofs that it was not only not obligatory, but not usual. They had Christian parents, and yet they were not baptized till they reached maturity. The liturgical service of baptism was framed entirely for full-grown converts, and is only by considerable adaptation applied to the case of infants. Gradually, however, the practice spread, and after the fifth century the whole Christian world, East and West, Catholic and Protestant, Episcopal and Presbyterian (with the single exception of the sect of the Baptists before mentioned), have baptized children in their infancy. Whereas in the early ages adult baptism was the rule and infant baptism the exception, in later times infant baptism is the rule and adult baptism the exception."

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

It will be seen that the learned Dean does not positively assert that there was no baptism of infants in the apostolic age, but he is very decided in affirming that there is no example of such baptism. He claims that for the first three centuries the almost universal practice was that "those who came to baptism came in full age, of their own deliberate choice." Only one case of infant baptism is found, and that in the third century. In fact, all the evidence goes to show that the practice had no place in the Primitive Church, and that it was not till after the fifth century that it became general.

Here, then, is a change from apostolic usage as great as, if not greater than, that from immersion to sprinkling. That change "set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism, and altered the very meaning of the word." What shall we now say of this "more important" departure from primitive practice? Can it, too, be justified on the ground that "the general sentiment of Christian liberty," as expressed in the decision of "the Christian civilized world," is more potential in authority than apostolic precept and example? If so, it seems to us that the much-talked-of Roman tendencies in certain Protestant churches need not any longer give great concern. For, if it be true, as Dean Stanley affirms, that "the substitution

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

of infant baptism, like the change from immersion to sprinkling, is a triumph of Christian charity," why may not that "charity" be made to cover the multitude of sins which are now laid at the door of the Ritualists of the Established Church? And what if these Ritualists should appeal to the "decision of the Christian civilized world," and claim a large majority in favor of their practices? Would such a churchman as Dean Stanley was extend to them the "charity" which "triumphs" over Divine authority to such an extent as to make the substitution of infant for believers' baptism a thing in which to rejoice? Surely, he would not wish to escape the consequence of his own logic, and yet if majorities are to decide such questions as are under consideration, it cannot for a moment be doubted that "the Christian civilized world" would soon restore to all the Pedobaptist Churches a number of practices that arose contemporaneous with Infant Baptism, but are now generally repudiated by Protestants. I refer to "Exorcism," "Infant Communion," "Anointing with Oil," etc., etc. After the fifth century these were in quite as high repute as Infant Baptism. So it appears that the very "Christian charity" which "triumphed" over the Word of God, and introduced one of these, was quite equal to the introduction of the others;

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

and the same charity which allows one of them *now* need not be stretched to any considerable extent in order to make canonical the whole catalogue. And when "the general sentiment of Christian liberty" has accomplished all this, we do not see why the Bible, as a book of authority, may not be dispensed with altogether. Then our "charity" would be fully equal to the demands of modern Rationalism, and could stand alone, without being burdened with the qualifying term "Christian," as used by the Dean of Westminster.

But it is proper that the good Dean himself should be heard in justification of a practice which had no place in the Apostolic Church, and which did not become general until after the fifth century. His explanation of the matter is, doubtless, as satisfactory as can be given, and if it is not entirely conclusive to those who still hold the Word of God in greater reverence than the traditions of the fathers, let all such remember that no explanation, however plausible, is possible that will entirely satisfy their scruples. But to those who believe that "the spirit which lives and moves in human society" should guide in religious matters rather than the Holy Spirit, Dean Stanley's reasoning will doubtless be accepted as an end of the controversy.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

In accounting for and justifying the change, the worthy Dean begins by saying: "There may have been many reasons for it, some bad, some good," and then proceeds to give the three reasons which he thinks have been most influential in bringing it about, and sustaining it to the present time.

1. "One, no doubt, was the superstitious feeling which regarded baptism as a charm, indispensable to salvation, and which insisted on imparting it to every human being who could be touched with water, however unconscious."

2. "There is a better side to the growth of the practice which, even if it did not mingle in its origin, is at least the cause of its continuance. It lay deep in early Christian feeling that the fact of belonging to a Christian household consecrated every member of it."

3. "There is a further reason to be found in the character of children. If our Divine Master did not think them unfit to be taken in His arms, and receive His own gracious blessing, when He was actually here in bodily presence, we need not fear to ask His blessing upon them now. Infant baptism is thus a recognition of the good which there is in every human soul."

The first of these reasons is given chiefly to account for the origin of infant baptism, while

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

the other two are relied upon to justify its continuance since it became so general. And thus it happens, after fifteen hundred years of the practice of infant baptism, there is nothing better offered in its defense, by one of the ablest men in Christendom, than a perverted view of the design of baptism, a sentimental notion of family relations, and a singular fancy that "infant baptism is a recognition of the good there is in every human soul."

Neander, as we have already seen, in his Church History, fully justifies the Dean's statement as to the origin of Infant Baptism. It should be remembered that the learned historian says: "When the notion of a magical influence or charm connected with the sacrament continually gained ground, the theory was finally evolved of the *unconditional necessity of infant baptism*." And John Wesley goes still further by clearly intimating the eternal damnation of infants without "original sin" is "washed away in baptism." In his "*Doctrinal Tracts*," page 251, edition 1832, we find the following remarkable language:

"As to the grounds of it: If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism, seeing in the ordinary way they cannot be saved unless this be washed in baptism. It has been already proved that this original stain cleaves to every child of man, and that hereby they are children of wrath, and liable to eternal damnation."

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

This is truly a horrible doctrine, and we are glad to notice that Dean Stanley, at least, seeks some other ground for the justification of a practice which had its origin in a view of human nature and baptism as repulsive as it is false. But, from a scriptural standpoint, Dean Stanley's reasons are no better than John Wesley's. The reference to Christ blessing little children is wholly irrelevant. Had he baptized these children, or commanded it to be done by others, the reference would be in point. The question, however, is not about *blessing*, but about *baptizing* infants, and no *argumentum ad hominem*, such as the Dean uses, is likely to be very effective in convincing those who in such matters prefer a "Thus saith the Lord" to any kind of sympathetic appeals to human feelings, however tender and eloquent they may be made.

After all, has not Henry Ward Beecher stated the case about as well as it can be done for the advocates of Infant Baptism? In a sermon, published in the *Christian Union*, Mr. Beecher dispenses with all the grounds heretofore relied upon, and comes directly to the point in the following original style:

"I have no authority from the Bible for the baptism of infants, and I want none; I have better authority for it than if even the Bible commanded it. I have tried it, and know from actual experience that it is a good thing. I have the

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

same divine authority for it that I have for making an ox-yoke—it works well, and therefore it is from God.”

This puts the whole argument, founded on “the general sentiment of Christian liberty,” in very forcible English, and should have had a place, at least as a foot-note, in Dean Stanley’s article, where he struggles so heroically to contradict the old Latin saying, *ex nihilo, nihil fit*—from nothing, nothing comes.

But we cannot close this chapter without calling attention to a very serious view of the whole matter. How can Protestants expect the people to reverence the Word of God, and accept it as authoritative in religious matters, when Christian teachers are willing to perform one of the most solemn acts connected with Christianity—an act done into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—but for the performance of which, as regards infants, there is no precept or example in the entire Bible? It seems to me that the people must either lose their respect for God’s Word—which is practically laid aside in the case under consideration—or else utterly repudiate the teaching which has its root in a practice conceded by its own advocates to exist without any authority from Christ or His apostles. If there is any middle ground here, I confess I am unable to see it.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

But the family idea alone could never have evolved the unconditional *necessity* of such a practice, nor made it so general, nor given it such a prominent place in the history of the Church as it has held. It was the idea that infants are exposed (as Wesley affirms) to eternal damnation, on account of original sin, and that baptism is the ordinary means by which this sin is washed away, to which must be ascribed the necessity of infant baptism, and also its rapid growth as a practice after it was first introduced. Parents could not endure the thought that their children might be lost, if their baptism should be neglected, and consequently the love of parents for their children became practically the motive power in the spread of infant baptism. Hence it will be seen that, whatever evils have attended infant baptism (and these have certainly been manifold), there can be no doubt about the fact that these evils may all be directly or indirectly traced to the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

THE MODERN THEORY.

Of course I am not ignorant of the fact that some modern writers, who repudiate the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, claim to deduce infant baptism from the teaching of the

DEAN STANLEY ON BAPTISM

New Testament. But in order to successfully do this, it is clearly evident that infants must be included in the Great Commission which our Divine Lord gave to his apostles, and in which they were commanded to disciple and baptize the nations. Are infants thus included? Surely the very terms of the commission seem to necessarily *exclude* them, since it is practically impossible for the commission to be applicable to infants as regards hearing the Gospel, believing the Gospel, repenting, receiving the remission of sins, or salvation, etc. Indeed, the only thing in the commission that can be possibly claimed for infants is baptism; and even this cannot be reasonably claimed if baptism is rightly regarded as the *act of the person who receives it*. And yet this is undoubtedly the scriptural view of baptism; and if this view is admitted, infants are necessarily excluded from all participation in the commission which Christ gave to his apostles.

But if it should still be contended that they are included in the commission, then one of three things must follow: (1) Either the apostles did not understand the commission; (2) they did not practice what they understood it to teach; or (3) a large and important part of their practice is not recorded. The first hypothesis impeaches their inspiration; the second

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

impeaches their honesty; while the third impeaches the character of the book which records their practice. Any view of the case that may be taken is at once fatal to the doctrine of infant baptism. And yet one of these hypotheses must be maintained, or else infants are logically excluded from the commission, and consequently excluded from baptism; for what is not authorized in the commission as regards baptism ought not to be maintained as a practice of the Church. And in view of the complete silence of the New Testament on the question of Infant Baptism, it is certain that Martin Luther was right when he said: "It cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the apostles."

CHAPTER IV.

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

JUST here it may be well to indicate briefly some of the main reasons why infant baptism should be rejected.

I. *It is undoubtedly unscriptural.* There is no way to escape the conclusion submitted in the foregoing reference to the Great Commission unless it can be shown that the household baptisms recorded in the New Testament do furnish a definite record of the baptism of infants. But few, if any, competent critics would rest their case upon any such evidence. The Rev. Joseph Agar Beet, one of the ablest writers of the Methodist Church, says in "A Treatise on Christian Baptism," pages 28 and 29, as follows:

"It must be at once admitted that the New Testament contains no clear proof that infants were baptized in the days of the apostles. It is true that St. Paul baptized the houses of Stephanas and of Lydia, and the Philippian Gaoler and all who belonged to him (1 Cor. 1:16; Acts 16:15, 33). But this mention of baptized households by no means proves or suggests that he baptized infants. For a courtier from Capernaum and Crispus at Corinth believed with their entire households (John 4:54; Acts 18:18). So apparently did the Gaoler (Acts 16:34). Cornelius feared God with all his house (Acts 10:2). And the household of

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

Stephanas was a first-fruit of Achaia (1 Cor. 16:15). This does not mean that in these five families there were no infants, or that the infants believed; but that all capable of understanding the Gospel believed it. Just so in reference to baptism. The early readers of the Book of Acts and of St. Paul's Epistles knew whether it was usual to baptize infants. If it was, they would infer that, if in these three families there were infants, St. Paul baptized them. If it was not, they would interpret these words to mean that he baptized all who were of suitable age. From these passages, therefore, we can draw no inference whether or not infants were baptized in the apostolic Churches. And we have no clearer references in the New Testament.

"In my Commentary on the passage I have endeavored to show that 1 Cor. 7:14 affords no evidence whether infants were or were not baptized in the apostolic Churches.

"It must also be admitted that in one important point the baptism of an infant differs from that of a believer. In baptism an infant is absolutely passive, whereas a believer is himself the most conspicuous actor. So great is this difference that two of the most important assertions about baptism in the New Testament are altogether inapplicable to the baptism of infants. Certainly, even though *baptized for Christ*, they have not so *put on Christ* as to be in him *sons of God through faith* (Gal. 3:26). For, to say that infants have faith, is to make St. Paul's words meaningless. Nor have infants been raised with Christ *through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead* (Col. 2:12)."

Equally conclusive is the testimony of the learned and candid historian, Dr. Augustus Neander, in his "Planting and Training of the Church," pages 161 and 162. He says:

"Since baptism marked the entrance into communion with Christ, it resulted from the nature of the rite that a

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

confession of faith in Jesus as the Redeemer would be made by the person to be baptized; and in the latter part of the Apostolic Age there are found indications of the existence of such a practice. As baptism was closely united with a conscious entrance on Christian communion, faith and baptism were always connected with one another; and thus it is in the highest degree probable that baptism was performed only in the instances where both could meet together, and that the practice of infant baptism was unknown at this period. We cannot infer the existence of infant baptism from the instance of the baptism of whole families, for the passage in 1 Cor. 16:15 shows the fallacy of such a conclusion, as from that it appears that the whole family of Stephanas, who were baptized by Paul, consisted of adults. That not till so late a period as (at least *certainly* not earlier than) Irenæus, a trace of infant baptism appears, and that it first became recognized as an apostolic tradition in the course of the third century, is evidence rather *against* than *for* the admission of its apostolic origin; especially since, in the spirit of the age when Christianity appeared, there were many elements which must have been favorable to the introduction of infant baptism—the same elements from which proceeded the notion of the magical effects of outward baptism, the notion of its absolute necessity for salvation, the notion which gave rise to the myth that the apostles baptized the Old Testament saints in hades. How very much must infant baptism have corresponded with such a tendency, if it had been favored by tradition! It might indeed be alleged, on the other hand, that after infant baptism had long been recognized as an apostolic tradition, many other causes hindered its universal introduction, and the same causes might still earlier have stood in the way of its spread, although a practice sanctioned by the apostles. But these causes *could not have operated in this manner in the post-apostolic age*. In later times, we see the opposition between theory and practice in this respect actually

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

coming forth. Besides, that a practice which could not altogether deny the marks of its later institution, although at last recognized as of apostolic founding, could not for a length of time pervade the life of the Church, is something quite different from this: that a practice really proceeding from apostolic institution and tradition, notwithstanding the authority that introduced it, and the circumstances in its favor arising from the spirit of the times, should yet not have been generally adopted. And if we wish to ascertain from whom such an institution originated, we should say, certainly not immediately from Christ himself."

Another important witness is Dr. William Cunningham, for many years Professor of Church History, New College, Edinburgh. In his "Historical Theology" he writes in defense of infant baptism, but on page 144 of volume II. he makes the following admissions as regards the teaching of Scripture:

"The general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject of baptism applies primarily and directly to the baptism of adults, and proceeds upon the assumption that the profession implied in the reception of baptism by adults—the profession, that is, that they had already been led to believe in Christ, and to receive Him as their Saviour and their Master—was sincere, or corresponded with the real state of their minds and hearts. It is necessary, therefore, to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of the objects and effects of baptism in itself, as a distinct subject, and in its bearing upon the general doctrine of the sacraments, from the baptism of adults, and not of infants. The baptisms which are ordinarily described or referred to in the New Testament were the baptisms of men who had lived as Jews and heathens, and who, having been

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

led to believe in Christ—or, at least, to profess faith in Him—expressed and sealed this faith, or the profession of it, by complying with Christ's requirement that they should be baptized. This is the proper, primary, full idea of baptism, and to this the general tenor of the Scripture language upon the subject, and the general description of the objects and ends of baptism, as given in our Confession of Faith, and in the other confessions of the Reformed Churches, are manifestly adapted."

In harmony with this testimony it would be possible to quote from the ablest writers of all ages of the Church. The most that can be said for infant baptism on scriptural grounds is that it may be *inferred* from certain passages and facts, but it is certainly nowhere either commanded or referred to in all the New Testament Scriptures. Surely, a matter involving so much ought to be accepted on nothing less than a divine precept or example.

2. *The practice of infant baptism is unreasonable.* There is nothing in it that meets the requirements of this scientific age. It belongs to a period when magic dominated the religious mind; when the incantations of a priesthood, dealing in magic, took the place of the Scriptures and common sense. While we ought not to respect that arrogant rationalism which demands a reason for everything, or that inexorable science which refuses to accept anything as true which cannot be demonstrated in the sci-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

entific laboratory, at the same time we should certainly seek to avoid in our religious practice whatever unnecessarily antagonizes the rationalistic and scientific spirit of the age. We surely ought not to needlessly make our religion objectionable where it may be scripturally made attractive. Infant baptism carries with it a sort of magical charm which is most unreasonable to many of the very best thinkers of the present day. It is, therefore, unwise to perpetuate an institution which stands right in the path of the most progressive notions of the learned world at the beginning of the twentieth century, unless there is a divine warrant for so doing, and we have just seen that this warrant cannot be found.

Professor Harnack, in his "History of Dogma," pages 306, 308, shows how, early in the history of the Church, mysteries and charms took the place of that which was reasonable in Christianity, and thus helped to canonize infant baptism. He says:

"This tendency, however, leads directly over to the paganizing of Christianity, or, rather, is already a symptom of it. The *mathesis* becomes *mustagogia*; the latter, however, originally a shadowy union of the spiritual and sensuous, tends more and more to magic and jugglery. In this the *ritual* is the chief thing; nothing, however, is more sensitive than a ceremony; it does not bear the slightest change. In so far now as the formulas of faith lost

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

more and more their significance as *matheesis*, and became in ever higher degree constituents of the ritual, expressing at the same time the meaning and purpose of it, *i. e.*, to make divine, they permitted no longer of any change. Wherever the dogma appear valuable only as a relic of olden times, or only in ritualistic ceremony, there the history of dogma is at an end. In its place comes the *mystagogic theology*, and indeed the latter, together and in close union with scholasticism, took already in the sixth century the place of the history of dogma. The mystagogic theology, however, has two sides. On the one side, in creating for itself upon the earth a new world, and in making of things, persons and times mysterious symbols and vehicles, it leads to the religion of necromancy, *i. e.*, back to the lowest grade of religion; for to the masses, and finally even to theologians, the spirit vanishes, and the *phlegma*, the consecrated matter, remains. * * *

“At the beginning of the fourth century the Church already possessed a great array of mysteries, the number and bounds of which, however, had by no means been definitely determined. Among them baptism, together with the accompanying unction, and the eucharist were the most esteemed; from these also some of the other mysteries have been evolved. Symbolic ceremonies, originally intended to accompany these mysteries, became independent. Thus confirmation had its origin, which Cyprian already numbered as a special ‘*sacramentum*,’ Augustine pointed it out as *sacramentum chrismatis*, and the Areopagite called it *musteerion teletees muron*. Later men spoke also of a mystery of the sign of the cross, of relics, of exorcism, of marriage, etc., and the Areopagite enumerates six mysteries: *Photismatos, sunaxeos, eif' oun koinonias, teletees muron, hieratikon teleioseon, monachikes teleioseos* and *musteeria epi ton hieros kekoimeemenon*. The enumeration was very arbitrary; mystery was anything sensuous whereby something holy might be thought or enjoyed. They corresponded to the heavenly mysteries,

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

which have their source in the trinity and incarnation. As each fact of revelation is a mystery, in so far as the Divine has through it entered into the sensuous, so in turn is each sensuous medium, even a word or action, a mystery, so soon as the sensuous is a symbol or vehicle—there has never been a strict distinction between them—of the Divine.”

In reference to the mystery of the sacraments, Dr. H. Martensen, in his “*Christian Dogmatics*,” page 421, deposes as follows:

“While the Lutheran and the Reformed doctrine is one and the same concerning the number of the sacraments and the necessity for faith as the condition of their saving efficacy, these Churches differ in their estimate of the mystery of the sacraments; and the Lutheran Church alone has retained the fullness of that mystery. Zwingli did away with the mystery altogether, for he looked upon the sacraments partly as mere acts of confession, and partly as commemorative signs. Calvin takes higher ground, for he looks upon them not only as memorials, but as *pledges* of present grace (*symbola non absentium sed præsentium, pignora gratiæ*), visible pledges of invisible union with Christ. He recognizes a mystery in the sacrament, because he assumes that, as pledges of grace, they are accompanied with an invisible gift of grace. Lutheranism also considers the sacraments to be pledges of grace,* and this coincidence of doctrine has always been insisted upon by the Philippists in this Church—the school of Melancthon—as the point of union between Luther and Calvin. But the distinction comes into view in the consideration of each sacrament, because Calvin does not consider that the union with Christ in the sacrament is more than a spiritual

**Confessio Augustana*, Part i., Art. xiii. “Signa et testimonia voluntatis Dei erga nos, ad excitandam et confirmandam fidem, in his, qui utuntur, proposita.” Similarly *Apol. Confess.* “Ritus qui habent mandatum Dei, et quibus addita est promissio gratiæ.”

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

union; he will not allow that it is spiritually corporeal. We cannot maintain the full reality and distinctiveness of the sacrament unless, with Luther, we recognize therein not only a spiritual mystery, but a mystery of nature likewise. If, with Calvin and the Philippists, we suppose that there is only a spiritual union, *unio mystica*, in the sacrament, its distinctive feature will be only its educational import."

In these extracts it is easy to see that the dogma of infant baptism had its origin in a tendency which ran everything into mysteries; and the unreasonableness of the dogma is shown the very moment it is associated with the Lord's Supper. The later institution is wholly unreasonable for infants. Nevertheless, it is impossible to separate the class for whom it was intended from those for whom baptism was intended. There is not even a hint in all the New Testament that the two ordinances belong respectively to different classes as regards age. On the contrary, everything clearly points to the fact that, in the primitive Church, the Lord's Supper always closely followed baptism. Indeed, this is so prominently brought to view in the New Testament that just as soon as the dogma of infant baptism became popular, the practice of infant communion became popular also. Nor was this a logical inconsistency. One legitimately followed the other. Undoubtedly Baptism and the Lord's Supper were orig-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

inally related to each other so as to suggest exactly the result which followed the introduction of infant baptism. At any rate infant communion arose contemporaneously with infant baptism, and was strongly advocated by such writers as Photius, Cyprian, Augustine, etc. The origin of the practice is given by Neander as follows:

“As the church of North Africa was the first to bring prominently into notice the necessity of infant baptism, so in connection with this they introduced also the *communion of infants*; for as they neglected to distinguish with sufficient clearness between the sign and the divine thing which it signified, and as they understood all that is said in the sixth chapter of John’s gospel concerning the eating of the flesh and the drinking of the blood of Christ to refer to the outward participation of the Lord’s Supper, they concluded that this, from the very first, was absolutely necessary to the attainment of salvation.

“And so it came about, that to the children who were not yet able to eat bread, they gave wine. Cfr. Cyprian, de lapsis. Once more an example how a superstitious abuse, contrary to the institution, led to a separation of the elements of the supper.—*Church History, Vol. I, p. 333.*

In Henry C. Lea’s “Studies in Church History,” the following statement is made concerning Infant Communion:

“Not satisfied with the frequent opportunities thus afforded of participating in the communion, pious souls would carry the Eucharist home with them, that they might enjoy its benefits at all times, and so universal was its administration, that infants of the tenderest years, as

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

soon as they received baptism, were expected to be brought regularly to the altar, where they joined unconsciously in the sacred mysteries, and an abuse at one time arose by which the holy symbol was even given to the dead—a profanation sharply reproved by the third council of Carthage in 397.”

Dr. Van Oosterzee suggests the following irenicon in his *Christian Dogmatics*, but we fear it will not meet the case:

“This is not the place for entering on an extended criticism of the Lutheran conception of the Sacraments; else it would not be difficult to demonstrate that it did not remain entirely free from the leaven of Rome, and that in its consistent development it also leads back to the doctrine of the *opus operatum*. To the Reformed proposition, that the signs of the New Testament as such do not immediately impart, but only visibly represent, the gifts of the grace of God (non exhibent, sed significant), though the personal enjoyment of this grace is secured to the believing use of them; to this doctrine, in our estimation, is undoubtedly due the praise of greater simplicity, clearness and scripturalness. It is, however, a different question, whether the entire conception of the Sacraments might not be removed from the Christian doctrine of Salvation, without serious loss; and we are almost induced to give an affirmative reply when we see the great amount of confusion and strife which has been caused by this churchly, but not scriptural, presentation. We apprehend, at least, that Melancthon at first spoke rather of signs than of Sacraments, as when in his *Loci* (1521) he writes, “*Quae alii Sacramenta, nos potius signa appellamus, aut, si ita libet, signa Sacramentalia*”; that in later days the Quakers not only considered these signs and seals themselves superfluous, but had already protested against the name; and that, to mention no others, Schleiermacher (a. a. O., § 136,

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

sqq.) condemns the general treatment of Baptism and the Lord's Supper under that appellation, and wishes that the entire expression should not, if choice were given, be naturalized in the ecclesiastical usage. Perhaps, if this comprehensive appellation were not used, some of the misty views concerning the significance and force of Baptism and the Lord's Supper might be avoided. On the other hand, however, we must confess that much may be said in favor of combining two relatively equivalent institutions under one banner; that which has already existed for a long time, even if only for the sake of clearness, has a certain right of existence if at least it is not absolutely pernicious; and since even the New Testament seems once to point out the two institutions simultaneously, so may the churchly conception of the Sacraments be maintained as combining the two, provided that everything be removed from it which cannot be sufficiently justified from the doctrine of the Gospel respecting Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The right view of Baptism and the Lord's Supper must not be derived from a conception of the Sacraments formed in later times; but on the contrary, if that name is to be retained, the pure conception of the Sacraments must be deduced from the accurate view of Baptism and the Lord's Supper." (Vol. II., Page 744.)

From the foregoing it will be seen that infant baptism has nothing in it to commend it to the demands of this scientific age. It is unreasonable from any point of view. If it should be disassociated from mysteries and charms, then we must ask, *Cui bono?* Does it benefit in any way the child? It would be difficult to show how this question should be answered in the affirmative. But if it cannot be so an-

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

swered, then it follows that infant baptism must rest on the magical relation which is assumed in the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. This at once makes the dogma unreasonable, and consequently unsuitable to the present age.

3. *Infant Baptism is unnecessary.* As already intimated it does no good to the child. The child is wholly unconscious of what takes place; and this being the fact it surely cannot derive any benefit from the baptism, unless the baptism carries with it a certain magical power which is supposed to reside in it according to the teaching of those who hold to the doctrine of sacramental grace, as expressed in what is known in theology as the "*Opus Operatum.*"

INFANTS DO NOT NEED BAPTISM.

But infants do not need baptism. What personal sin have they committed? Even allowing that they fully share in Adam's transgression, there is still no reason why they should be baptized. The penalty of Adam's sin is death; but Christ has taken away the sting of death, and robbed the grave of its victory. In other words, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"; so that what infants lost in Adam they gained in Christ; indeed, they gained much more in Him than they

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

lost by what has been called original sin. The notion, therefore, that infants must be baptized, in order to "escape eternal damnation," is as untrue to Scripture as it is absurd in the light of human reason, and ought at once to be remanded to that theological museum where are deposited so many curious speculations of the schoolmen.

Nevertheless, I fear that even now there are still not a few who unhesitatingly accept the dogma of the early Church upon which the practice of infant baptism was founded; while there are at least some others who practically accept the same view, though they are not willing to admit it. Parental love has still a most potent influence in keeping the practice of infant baptism alive; for the anxiety which this love produces finds relief in the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. Parents may not always admit their belief in the doctrine, and in some cases they may be half unconscious of any such belief; but every one knows, who knows anything about the matter at all, that infant baptism is still mainly practiced in order to satisfy the fears of parents that their infants are not safe without it. We may call this superstition, if we wish to do so; but no matter what we call it, it is precisely this feeling which originated, multiplied, and perpetu-

REASONS AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM

ated the practice under consideration; and it is precisely this feeling which underlies the practice to-day, whether parents are willing to admit it or not, or whether they are conscious of it or not.

But some may think that our growing intelligence on this subject ought, by this time, to practically overcome a purely theological superstition. But this view of the matter does not take sufficiently into the account all the factors involved. It has already been pointed out how parental love, when controlled by a false anthropology, and by an equally false soteriology, became the source and strength of infant baptism. It must now be pointed out how the love of children for their parents enters largely into the maintenance of that which the love of parents for children practically originated. The respect which children show for the baptism they have received from their parents is really the answer of child love to parental love. Thousands of children, when they are grown up, would at once repudiate the baptism of their infancy, were it not that they feel that such repudiation would necessarily imply a want of love for their parents, and would show a sort of disrespect to parental authority. There can be no doubt about the fact that this feeling is widespread, and is also

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

most potential as regards the maintenance of the practice of infant baptism. It is a feeling, too, which any one must regard with considerable sympathy, as it enters so largely into all that is sacred in home life. At any rate, it is a feeling which must be constantly reckoned with by those who wish to overthrow a practice which the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration has made holy in the affections of both parents for their children and children for their parents.

CHAPTER V.

SUMMING UP THE CASE.

THIS brings me to look at another difficulty which is closely akin to the one we have just considered. I refer to what may be called the *Ex Post Facto* Difficulty. There is always a strong current against any change of established customs, habits, or institutions. Infant baptism is an established practice; or, to use a legal phrase, it is already in possession, and this is said to be nine points in law.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Suppose I wish to sell Mr. Jones a new range for his kitchen. I may not have much difficulty in convincing him of the superiority of the range I offer him over the one he now possesses. But he reasons somewhat as follows: "My old range, though not so good as the new one, really answers my purpose. It will do. I have used it for many years, and it has done good, faithful service. It will continue to do this service for many years to come; so I will hold on to it rather than throw it away and substitute for it a new range which would require a considerable outlay of money." This practically settles my range enterprise.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

There would perhaps be little difficulty in selling Mr. Jones my new range if his old one was out of the way. The main difficulty is in getting rid of the old range; and consequently, before I can get my new range into Mr. Jones' kitchen, it is not enough for me to convince him that mine is better than his, but I must show him how he may advantageously dispose of the one he now has.

This illustration will help us to understand why so many people hold on to infant baptism, even after they are convinced that believers' baptism is much better. They somehow or other persuade themselves that the former will do; and especially since it has been in service so long, and has connected with it so many sacred associations. And, curiously enough, this view of the matter is strongly emphasized the moment we claim that baptism has no regenerative power. When it is suggested that baptism is in no way connected with salvation, immediately the question arises, why then should any one make trouble about it, whether it is administered in infancy or in old age? Consequently, those who have been baptized in infancy do not care to change to what really promises no special advantage. In other words, they do not care to exchange even a worthless range for one that is equally worth-

SUMMING UP THE CASE

less. Nor is that all. An *ex post facto* law is always distasteful; and it is not therefore strange that those who have been baptized in infancy should often rebel against the demand made upon them to submit to believers' baptism—a baptism which virtually requires them to undo what has already been accomplished.

What, then, is a legitimate argument against infant baptism, and how can the practice be overthrown? I answer, unhesitatingly, by a return to Christ's supreme authority in the matter, instead of listening to what men have decreed. I do not for one moment question the powerful influence of family ties, as respects the question under consideration; but Christ has clearly taught, that unless we love Him more than father or mother, houses or lands, we can not be His disciples. Hence we must consult *Him* rather than parental love or child love, even though His authority should break the most sacred ties of the flesh. But as regards the case now before us, the moment we accept Christ as our sole leader, that moment will there be perfect harmony between His teaching and all the rational demands of family life. The restoration of His supreme authority will at once put baptism in its right place; and when this is done the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration will no longer have influence, and,

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

as a consequence, infant baptism will gradually fall into disuse. The evil practice has come out of Baptismal Regeneration, and in order to effect a cure we must remove the cause of the evil; and as this cause has been found in a perverted view of baptism, in conjunction with the doctrine of original sin, our present hope is in carrying our case over all the traditions of an apostate Church back to Christ Himself, who divinely commissioned His apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and to baptize those who believed it. And as proof that these apostles did baptize only those who were believers, we need go no further than simply examine carefully all the cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament. Such examination will soon reveal the fact that infant baptism is wholly without a shred of Divine authority. Here, then, is the true remedy for the practice, and the case resolves itself into the simple query, "Shall we obey God rather than men?"

INFANT BAPTISM IN ITS EFFECTS.

Before dismissing the practice which we have had under consideration, it may be well to notice some of the evil effects which it has produced in the development of historic Christianity. It is certainly most important that

SUMMING UP THE CASE

a clear distinction should be drawn between the Christianity of the New Testament and the Christianity of the Churches as this is seen in Church history. And among the first departures from primitive practice may be reckoned infant baptism; and some of the evil consequences of this practice may be enumerated as follows:

(1) It practically substitutes flesh for faith, and makes the Church a fleshly institution instead of a spiritual household, as was clearly intended by its Divine Founder.

(2) It takes away from the individual the highest privilege which the gospel confers, *viz.*, the privilege of choice. This is one of the most fatal evils of infant baptism.

(3) It sets aside personal responsibility by assuming that others may do an act for us which can only be performed by ourselves. This makes religious life formal and perfunctory instead of spiritual and real.

(4) It destroys the beautiful symbolism of the gospel, and thereby practically annihilates what was intended to be a striking and perpetual proof of Christ's resurrection. By substituting flesh for faith and sprinkling for immersion the whole teaching of the sixth chapter of Romans becomes meaningless; and at the same time the significant monument

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

which Divine wisdom has erected to testify to the doctrine of the resurrection has been completely demolished. But as this doctrine is fundamental in Christianity, it becomes at once evident that whatever is responsible for Infant Baptism must be a fundamental error, since infant sprinkling has taken away the great monumental proof of the resurrection. And as Baptismal Regeneration is responsible for infant baptism, it follows, with irresistible force, that the former is really what I have characterized it, *viz.*, the Fundamental Error of Christendom.

(5) We have already seen that infant baptism is supported by the notion that there is either a magical charm in baptism itself, or else there is a magical charm in being born of believing parents. Either the baptism itself, *ex opere operato*, produces a moral change in the child, or else a moral change is produced in the child by the faith of the parents. In the first case, a power is ascribed to baptism which it does not possess, while the pernicious doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is inculcated and enforced; in the latter case the equally pernicious doctrine that faith is propagated by fleshly descent is practically affirmed and inculcated; and yet this doctrine literally destroys precisely what is characteristic in Chris-

SUMMING UP THE CASE

tianity, *viz.*, spirituality, personality, and individuality.

(6) The practice of infant baptism brings into the Churches a large number of unregenerated members, and thereby makes Church life formal, cold, and often fruitless. Do we ask for an explanation of what we see and hear as respects the want of earnest consecration among the members of the Churches? Much that will help in such an explanation may be found in the fact that many Church members have never been regenerated in the true scriptural sense of that term. The Church has become a fleshly institution. Men and women are in it simply because their fathers and mothers were in it. In other words, they are members by virtue of their fleshly relationship to those from whom they are descended. This fact is fatal to spiritual development, and practically destroys the very meaning of the Church.

(7) Infant baptism displaces the baptism of believers, and to that extent makes void a commandment of Christ by a tradition of men. This evil can not be over-estimated. It might be considered from many points of view, but I need not detain the reader with more than one or two of the numerous evils growing out of this substitution. In the first place, the whole order of the gospel has been perverted by

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

it. The New Testament order is preaching, hearing, believing, and then baptism; but the substitution to which attention is called begins with baptism instead of ending with it. Infants are supposed to be changed from children of wrath to children of God by the priest's sprinkling water upon them in the name of the Holy Trinity; and yet when these children are grown up, evangelicals regard their conversion as necessary in order to their salvation. Surely nothing could be more contradictory than such notions. But this is not all. The worst remains yet to be told. If infant baptism is allowed to take the place of believers' baptism, what becomes of the authority of Christ? Undoubtedly, infant baptism must be surrendered, or else Christ's supreme authority in religious matters can no longer be enforced. Our loyalty to Him ought to make our decision both quick and unmistakable as regards this important matter. Are we equal to such courageous action? It is simply a question of Christ or men, which? What answer are we ready to give?

If the reader should still find it difficult to account for the spread of a practice which is so at variance with the Scriptures, so contrary to what is reasonable, and so unnecessary as regards any good results that may follow from

SUMMING UP THE CASE

it, it will help to understand the matter by remembering the powerful influence which tradition exerts over the human mind. It is true that some of the worst features of departures from the simplicity of the primitive Church have been, to some extent, counteracted, and in a few instances discontinued, by the influence of the Lutheran Reformation, but it is still true that many are governed by the "tradition of the fathers" rather than by the holy Scriptures. It is not enough to abandon Infant Communion and its associated absurdities, but it is necessary to break the force of tradition right where its influence is most potential. Nor can we hope for a complete return to apostolic Christianity, and the consequent conversion of the world, until the authority of the holy Scriptures is substituted everywhere for the authority of tradition.

In reference to this matter it would be easy to quote from nearly all the ablest theological writers in support of my position. However, it is only necessary to give a few extracts from some of the ablest and most authoritative Pedobaptist scholars.

Dr. Martensen, one of the most eminent Lutheran writers, deposes as follows against tradition and in favor of the Scriptures;

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

"It is obvious that, unless our Christianity is to be a merely subjective, private Christianity, there must be a canon of Christianity, independent of our subjective moods and circumstances. Now, the objective canon for all Christianity is, it is true, nothing else than *Christ himself*, as a holy, personal Redeemer; and, if it is asked *where* we find Christ, our first answer is the same as the Catholic gives—in the *Church*, which is the body of Christ, the organism of which He is the living, omnipresent Head. In the Church in its confessions and its proclamations, in its sacraments and its sacred services, the exalted and glorified Redeemer is present, and bears living testimony to Himself in behalf of all who believe through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is, however, on the other hand, obvious that a correct relation to the exalted, glorified Christ is conditional upon a correct relation to the *historical* Christ, to the historical facts of His revelation, without which one's conception of the exalted and glorified Christ loses itself in the vagueness of mysticism. Hence, when we say that we must look for Christ in the Church, we are led back to the Apostolic Church. The Apostolic Church exhibits to us not only the original form of Christian life, and the relation which it presents, as sustained by Christian believers to the invisible Redeemer after His ascent to heaven; but it is, at the same time, the possessor of the original image of Christ, the image of the Word, which became flesh and dwelt among us; the image of Christ as He was historically revealed. Now, it being certain that the Apostolic Church, as opening the progressive development of the Church, contained Christianity in its genuine form, it is quite as certain that there must have been delivered to us a trustworthy exhibition of Christianity as it originally was. For this is certain: *either* no one can now make out what Christianity is, in which case Christianity is not a divine revelation, but only a myth, or a philosophical dogma; *or* there must have been given a reliable tradition of the manner in which the apostles conceived and received

SUMMING UP THE CASE

Christ, whereby every succeeding age is enabled to preserve its connection with the Apostolic Church, and with genuine Christianity. So far we agree with the Catholics. Our views, however, differ from theirs in that we, with the Reformers, find the perfect, trustworthy form of apostolic tradition only in the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament. As to tradition—in the sense of something handed down by the Church, side by side with the New Testament—we hold, with the Reformers, that there is nothing in it which can, with such certainty as can the Scriptures, demonstrate that it had an immediate or even mediate apostolic origin, and that it has preserved through long ages its pure, apostolic form. We hold, therefore, that the Scriptures are the ultimate touchstone of criticism (*lapis lydius*), which must decide on the Christianity of tradition. Even though we must say that the *essentials* of Christianity are found in tradition, that the Spirit of Christ controls its development, still experience teaches that inspiration was not continued in the post-apostolic times, and that very soon, in the formation of traditions, there arose a mixture of canonical and apocryphal elements. Facts likewise show that, in those periods of the post-apostolic Church, in which the growth of tradition was not controlled by the Holy Scriptures, a purely apocryphal tradition has been developed. The oral tradition of the apostles had to be exposed very early to disfigurement. But in contrast with the fleeting and mutable character of tradition, the Scriptures remain a firm, immovable witness. *Littera scripta manet*. This faith in the Scriptures which we share with the Reformers; this faith in their sufficiency as a canon of Christianity, in the completeness of the apostolic testimony therein recorded; this faith is a part of our Christian faith in Providence, in the guidance of the Church by the Lord;—a faith which, like every form of faith in Providence, cannot be demonstratively proved, and can be confirmed only by the lapse of time. Within the sphere of our own experience, however, we are able to see, in view of the evident uncertainty

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

of tradition, that without the Scriptures we should have no firm hold, and should not be able to distinguish what is canonical from what is apocryphal. Without the Scriptures a reformation of the Church in that long period of corruption, of darkness, would have been impossible; and a new founding of the church, or at least a new mission of apostles, would have been necessary.*

"The principle maintained by the Reformers respecting the Scriptures assumes primarily a negative attitude towards tradition; but its relation to tradition is by no means merely negative, although often so conceived. There are indeed those who hold the principle in such a form that they admit nothing to be valid in the Church whose biblical origin cannot be in the strictest manner authenticated! But this view is entirely foreign to the Lutheran Reformation, although traces of it may be found in the Swiss. The Lutheran Reformation, in its original form, took a positive attitude towards both dogmatic and ritual tradition, in so far as it was *œcumenical* tradition; *i. e.*, so far as it bore the mark of no particular Church, being neither Greek Catholic nor Roman Catholic, but simply catholic. Accordingly, the Evangelical Church adopts the œcumenical symbols, the Apostolic, the Nicæan, and the Athanasian, as the purest expression of dogmatic tradition. Thus Luther's Catechism retains, in the Ten Commandments, the three Creeds, the Lord's Prayer, and the doctrine of the sacrament, of baptism, and of the altar, the same fundamental elements in which

*Cf. Thiersch: *Vorlesungen über Katholicismus und Protestantismus*, vol. i., p. 320. "This is an act of the confidence which we put in Divine Providence and in the guidance of the Church by Christ and His Spirit. For it was not unknown to the Most High that a time would come when whatever was derived from the apostles in the form of unwritten tradition would, through the long-continued fault of men, become unstable and unreliable, and that His Church would need a sacred, uncorrupted record accessible to all, such as His people under the Old Covenant had had in the writings of Moses and the prophets. For, if the Holy Scriptures are not the refuge to which the Church is directed to fly, since that which is called tradition has become the object of just offence and insoluble doubt, then the Church has no refuge at all, no secure position, and there would be left for her nothing but to wait to be a second time miraculously founded, or to look for a new mission of apostles."

SUMMING UP THE CASE

primitive Christianity was propagated among the common people through the darkness of the middle ages. Thus, too, the Reformers pointed to a series of testimonies out from early Church, a *consensus patrum*, in proof of the primitive character and age of their doctrine. And Luther and Melancthon recognized not only the importance of dogmatic tradition, but manifested also the greatest reverence and caution in reference to ritual tradition. The importance which they attached to this is shown especially in their retaining and defending, in opposition to the Anabaptists, infant baptism, a custom which is certainly derived not chiefly from the Scriptures, but from tradition. The same thing is shown by their continuing to observe the principal Christian festivals; for these, too, were the product of a continued tradition. In like manner they retained many portions of the liturgy and of the hymns of the Church, which had acquired a value for all Christians. Thus we see that, by their principles, Scripture and tradition were not torn asunder, but only placed in their proper relation to each other. And even if it may be said that the Reformers, finding themselves entangled in a web of traditions, in which true and false, canonical and apocryphal elements were almost indissolubly mixed together, sometimes cut the knot instead of untying it,—this proves nothing against the principle of the primacy of Scripture. For this rule cannot be annulled or altered so long as nothing can be put beside the Scriptures that is able to vindicate for itself the same degree of authority.”—*Christian Dogmatics*, pages 32, 33, 34.

Dr. Martensen’s statement clearly indicates how it is that infant baptism is still continued in practice notwithstanding there is neither precept nor example for it in the Word of God. The practice is an inheritance. The Reformers did not reform sufficiently. They retained

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

in the new Churches germs of the old apostasy. Among these may be reckoned Infant Baptism. This baptism is the fruit of tradition, and consequently clings to us with all the tenacity of a traditional habit or custom. Nor can we get rid of it until we throw tradition overboard and return to the simple faith and practice of the New Testament Scriptures. This will restore the supreme authority of the Christ in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, and this restoration of the Divine for the human will at once place Infant Baptism just where it rightfully belongs, viz.: among the discredited relics of the great Apostasy which has so long dominated over and corrupted the Church as founded by Christ and organized and instructed by His Holy Apostles.

CHAPTER VI.

SACERDOTALISM

We now come to consider the second great evil which I mentioned in the early part of this volume as coming out of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, namely, the evil of Sacerdotalism. Priestcraft can not flourish where Christ reigns supreme, where Divine authority is paramount over the commandments of men. But when Christ is dethroned, and when human creeds or traditions of men are substituted for New Testament teaching, it is easy to see how Sacerdotalism may logically follow. That it has followed with terrible effect no one will dispute who has any comprehensive and accurate knowledge of Church history.

The following are just and clear statements by two eminent modern scholars of the use and character of Sacerdotalism, and it will be seen that it had its origin in exactly the same source to which Infant Baptism has been traced, viz.: the mysterious function of "Sacramental grace," such as is supposed by ritualists to reside in Baptism and the Eucharist:

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

"Sacerdotalism was a common characteristic of pagan and current Jewish religion. That the Christian minister should soon cease to be a brother among the brethren, owing common obedience to a common Lord, and as one chosen and set apart for Christian leadership presiding over the administration of discipline, of charity, and of the ordinances and that he should come to be regarded as a mediator between God and men, possessed of magical power by virtue of his office, was something that could have been avoided only by constant miraculous Divine interposition. Such interposition, history attests, was withheld. Christianity was a leaven. The life and personal labors of the Christ and of His apostles and the inspired body of doctrine contained in the New Testament were given to the world. Churches were planted and organized under inspired guidance. Henceforth the leaven was to be allowed to do its work, not certainly without Divine help and direction, but without such violent interposition as would interfere with development along natural lines. Pure Christianity was sure in the end to triumph; but not until it had to a great extent absorbed, or been absorbed by, paganism. By becoming assimilated to paganism, Christianity was to secure the nominal allegiance of the peoples of Western Africa, Northern Africa, and Europe. Its vitality was never to be entirely destroyed, nor was there to be a time when Christ should be without faithful witnesses; but organized Christianity was to become so corrupt and so perverse that the notes of the apostolic Church could scarcely be discovered.

"The time would come when vital Christianity, with the Bible as its watchword and its guide, would powerfully reassert itself and would throw off the accretions of centuries; but so thoroughly entrenched did these corruptions become that the process must needs be a slow one. When we consider the obstacles to the restoration of apostolic Christianity that have presented themselves, the natural conservatism that shrinks from departure from traditional positions, the tremendous influence of State-churchism

SACERDOTALISM

and the preference of multitudes of people for a religion of forms and ceremonies, with its priestly absolutions and consolations, the wonder is that so much progress has been made.

"The departure of the Church of the second and third centuries from the apostolic standard was by no means confined to the matter of baptism. The same influences soon caused the Lord's Supper to be looked upon no longer as a memorial feast in which believers partook in a purely symbolical way of the broken body and the poured-out blood of their crucified, risen and glorified Lord, but rather as a mystic ceremony to be celebrated with elaborate ritual. This change was likewise due to pagan influences brought to bear chiefly through the Gnostic sects.

"Other perversions of Christianity during the early centuries are so universally recognized by historians and so familiar to all readers of Church history, that they need only be barely mentioned here. Sacerdotalism, a constant factor in pagan religious systems, soon intruded itself into the Christian Church. The ordinances having become mysteries must be administered by a ceremonially qualified priesthood; and as the services became elaborate and each function must be performed by a properly qualified functionary, clerical gradations came to be multiplied and accurately differentiated. Out of the simple polity of the apostolic time, in accordance with which each congregation chose its own bishops or presbyters and deacons for the direction of the spiritual work of the body, the administration of discipline and the collection and distribution of charities, there was developed, under the influences of the time, a system of presidential administration in which the chief elder (or bishop) directed the affairs of the local church with the assistance and advice of a board of presbyters. As the responsible head of the church he soon came to have chief control of the finances, and such control tended to increase his relative importance. As Christian work spread from older centers the newly established congregations were kept in relations of dependence on the

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

mother church, or rather, as integral parts thereof. Thus the pastor of the central church would have the supervision of a greater or smaller number of outside congregations, over each of which a presbyter of the central church came to preside. Thus arose diocesan episcopacy. At first this arrangement was adopted without any ambitious intentions on the part of the pastors as seemingly the most effective way of conducting Christian work. But as the dependent congregations became conscious of strength and their presbyter-pastors became restless under episcopal control, which in some cases was no doubt arbitrarily exercised, friction arose between bishops and presbyters. By this time (about the middle of the third century, the case of Cyprian and the Carthaginian presbyters is in point) the sacerdotal idea was pretty fully developed. Cyprian and those who were like-minded believed that ecclesiastical unity was absolutely essential and that schism was one of the greatest of evils. They went so far as to maintain that outside of the ecclesiastical organization, whose center of unity was found in the episcopate, there is no salvation.”*

“What is Sacerdotalism? It is the doctrine that the man who ministers in sacred things, the institution through which, and the office or order in which, he ministers, the acts he performs, the sacraments and rites he celebrates, are so ordained and constituted of God as to be the peculiar channels of His grace, essential to true worship, necessary to the being of religion, and the full realization of the religious life. The sacerdotal system, with all its constituents and accessories, personal, official, and ceremonial, becomes a vast intercessory medium, held to be, as a whole and in all its parts, though organized and administered of man, so the creation and expression of the divine will as to be the supernatural, authorized, and authoritative agency for the reconciliation of God and

* Albert Henry Newman, D. D., LL. D., in a history of Anti-Pedobaptism.

SACERDOTALISM

man. So conceived, Sacerdotalism is not a question in Church polity; it may need bishops, but bishops do not necessarily either imply or involve it. A man may, for many reasons, exegetical, historical, empirical, hold that episcopacy is the true, or the safest, or the best ecclesiastical polity, and yet be strenuously opposed to a priesthood or things priestly. Where the Sacerdotalism comes in is where the man and the institution, with the acts and articles needed for its operation, are made so of the essence of religion that where they are not it cannot be in its truth and purity; that to belong to it a man must belong to them; that through them, and them only, can God come, as it were, into full possession of the man, or the man into full and living fellowship with God. The difference then, between Church polity and Sacerdotalism may be stated thus: the one is a formal, the other is a material, question; the one relates to the form under which the Christian Society is to be ordered, maintained, and realized, but the other relates to the actual nature and matter of the Christian religion, what it is, and what is necessary to its being, and its work. The question as to Polity is important, but secondary; the question as to Sacerdotalism is primary and essential. It signifies, at root, what do men mean when they speak of Christ and the Christian religion.

So much for Sacerdotalism in the abstract; let us now look at it in the concrete, as in part realized and labouring after fuller realization within the Anglican Church. Its historical basis and framework is the Anglican polity, which it builds on, fills up, and explains thus: It affirms, first, that this polity, with its various clerical orders, is of divine institution. Christ entrusted to the College of the Apostles plenary ministerial authority, sent them as He had been sent, endowed with the power to transmit what He had given, just as He could give what He had received of the Father.* In accordance with this divine authority

* "A Father in Christ." Sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral at the consecration of the Bishops of Lincoln and Exeter, by H. P. Lid-
don, D. D., D. C. L. Second edition, pp. 8, 9.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

they created, and filled with duly qualified men, certain orders or grades of ministers. They appointed Deacons to serve in things secular, to care for the poor, to preach, and even to baptize. They appointed Presbyters or Bishops to serve in things sacred, to teach, to guide, to govern the flock, to celebrate the eucharist—indeed, to exercise full ministerial functions, except in the cardinal matter “of transmitting the ministry.” And, finally, they instituted a special order, represented in the primitive Church by Timothy and Titus, whose high function it was to ordain the men chosen to sacred offices. It affirms, secondly, that this order survives in the modern bishop, who stands thus in the direct line of apostolical succession. In Judaism the sacerdotal principle was physical and hereditary; in Anglicanism it is social and hieratic; it is a theory of lineal hierarchical descent. Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him; the Anglican and Catholic bishops were in the spirit of Paul when he ordained Timothy and Titus. It affirms, thirdly, that the bishop is necessary to the being of the priest. He alone can ordain the man who possesses full ministerial capacity; men not so ordained may preach, or even administer baptism, but the communities in which they serve “lack participation in those privileges which depend upon a ministry duly authorized by Christ our Lord.”* It affirms, fourthly, that without the priest so ordained, worship in the full spiritual Christian sense is not possible, for on him depends “the validity of the eucharist.” † It affirms, fifthly, that the Sacraments are the means necessary to the creation and maintenance of spiritual life. Baptism is “the great sacrament of our regeneration,” and the eucharist is “our chief means of communion with our Lord.”‡ And these parts so hang together as to constitute a logical and consistent whole; the polity is a divine creation, the very form in which God decreed religion to be realized in the world. The episcopate is “organically

* *Ib.* Preface, p. xxxviii. † *Ib.* p. 15. ‡ *Ib.* p. 15; Preface, p. xxxviii:

SACERDOTALISM

necessary to the structure of the visible Body of Christ"; "necessary not merely to its *bene esse*, but to its *esse*."* For without Christ there had been no apostles; without apostles, no bishops; without bishops, no priests; without priests, no sacraments; without sacraments, no Church; without the Church, no Christian religion. The theory is sublime and consolatory when viewed in relation to the Church which possesses these divine orders, prerogatives and graces; but the gentler spirits that hold it are moved with pity when they turn to those who choose to dwell in regions where are none of "the chartered channels" through which the river of life loves to flow. Yet the pity is soothed by the thought that even "lay-baptism" is valid, and we are graciously comforted by the assurance that it "carries with it a share in the communion of saints, and, much more, a right to bear the Christian name." But lest we be exalted above measure, we are reminded that lacking "a duly authorized ministry," we lack "in particular the precious sacrament of the Body and Blood" of our Lord.† The old saying was, "No bishop, no king"; the new saying is, "No bishop, no priest, and no priest, no Church"; and so the last consequence is, that the religion of Christ has vital or real and authoritative being for the people of England only as the Episcopal and Sacerdotal Church lives and reigns in our midst."‡

Among the first supports which priestly domination received was the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. This doctrine placed the dispensing of salvation wholly and absolutely into the hands of the priests; for almost contemporaneous with the origin of the Baptismal heresy the doctrine of Apostolic Succession be-

* Ib. p. 13. † Ib. pp. xxxviii.—xxxix. ‡ Rev. Principal Fairbairn, D. D.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

gan to dawn. And when that doctrine became fully established the power of the priest was at once made supreme and permanent. The steps by which he reached this power are logical enough, when once the premises used are admitted. These steps may be traced as follows: First, the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, which practically made salvation impossible without baptism; second, the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, which made baptism impossible without the administrator had received regular or legitimate ordination; and, third, the intense love of parents for their children, which made infant baptism a necessity, in order to save from the fear that infants are exposed to eternal damnation on account of original sin. Or, to put the argument in another form: parental love demanded the salvation of children, but this salvation could not be secured without baptism; and the baptism could not be had without the intercession of the priest, and the priest could not officiate unless he was properly ordained. But when once inducted into his priestly office, the priest practically held the keys of authority over all families; for the very matter of dispensing salvation was wholly in his hands. No wonder fathers and mothers soon became practically bond slaves to a class of men who have not in-

SACERDOTALISM

frequently exercised their power in a way most disastrous to everything that is noble in family life, or authorized in the Church of God. No wonder a large portion of the world sympathizes with Burns's characterization of them when he asks,—

“Say, what are priests, those seeming godly-wise men?
What are they, pray, but spiritual excise men?”

It does not break the force of this statement to say that in some cases baptism could be administered by laymen. Practically this never amounted to anything with those who held to the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.

In order to find a remedy for all this we must again turn to Christ. In the case of the evil of infant baptism we found our help in Him; and now we must look to Him as the Source of our help in dealing with the evil of Sacerdotalism. He is our only Priest, for no one, save the Lord Jesus Christ, has the liberty of direct access unto God; no other sacrifice than His can possibly take away sin; it is only through Him that God is propitious to sinners; and, finally, it is only through Him that God's grace is conveyed to the world. Hence it will be seen that a proper respect for Christ's sacrifice, intercession, and kingly power is the only effective remedy for the pretensions of Sacerdo-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

talism, or the domination of those “spiritual excise men” who have so long lorded it over the conscience of the people.

SUMMARY OF EVILS.

The whole case against Sacerdotalism may be summed up as follows:—

(1) It substitutes an earthly priesthood for a heavenly, and makes the intercession of the “one Mediator between God and man” depend upon the intervention of men.

(2) It makes necessary the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, in order to make plausible the claim of special, priestly authority.

(3) It destroys individual responsibility by committing the affairs of the soul to the keeping of a class of men who are supposed to have special charge of soul life.

(4) It fosters the worst kind of despotism, by delegating to others the right to lord it over the individual conscience in all matters relating to religion.

(5) It places the forgiveness of sins in the hands of men, and thereby courts dishonesty, for filthy lucre’s sake, in dealing with souls. The whole iniquity of indulgences came out of Sacerdotalism.

(6) It places a strong temptation in the way of weak men to clandestinely use the

SACERDOTALISM

sanctions of religion for the satisfaction of lust, and opens up an easy road to all kinds of licentiousness.

(7) It introduces class distinctions in the Church, and practically abrogates the law of unity, which is intended to everywhere dominate God's children. The distinction between priest and laity finds no countenance in the Word of God. In Christ Jesus all conventional distinctions are broken down, and all are declared to be one in Him.

A MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

Before dismissing the subject of Sacerdotalism it may be well to have before us a clear and comprehensive statement of this whole matter from another point of view; and in making such a statement I prefer to use the language of writers who are recognized as authority on such a question. I quote first from Neander:

"The essence of the Christian community rested on this: that no one individual should be the chosen pre-eminent organ of the Holy Spirit for the guidance of the whole; but all were to co-operate,—each at his particular position, and with the gifts bestowed on him, one supplying what might be wanted by another,—for the advancement of the Christian life and of the common end. In this view of it, the New Testament idea of the *charisma* becomes important; the *charisma*, by which is designated the individuality and

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

diversity in the operations of the Spirit that quickens all, as contradistinguished from that which in all is the same; the *peculiar* kind and manner or form of the activity of that common principle, so far as it is conditioned by the peculiar natural characteristics of each individual. Just as the unity of that higher Spirit must reveal itself in the manifoldness of charismata, so must all these peculiarities, quickened by the same Spirit, serve as organs, mutually helping each other for one common end, the edification of the Church." (Church History, Vol. I, Page 181.)

The following is from a scholarly and remarkably candid volume, entitled "Catholic Thoughts on the Church of Christ and the Church of England," by Frederic Myers, M. A.:

"In the Church of Christ there is no magistracy, only a ministry. This difference must above all things be kept in mind. The Church Catholic, or any particular Church, being essentially a spiritual Republic, and a body in which no worldly distinctions are in any way even recognized, does not admit of any functionaries corresponding to those of any society of this world. The Church Catholic, however, has even no ministers; because, as has been said, it has no organization as a whole on earth—no common will acting towards a common object. The apostles were the only persons who ever have had a Catholic commission: who ever were ministers of Christ emphatically, and as such rulers of the Church. And this they were because their Commission was to found the Church and not to represent it; to be its legislative rather than its executive body; and because they were inspired with something to reveal, and gifted with something to impart, which no other than they ever had; and these things make so great a difference between their case and that of all others as to render them no imitable precedents for any succeeding age. In this sense they had, and can have, no

SACERDOTALISM

Successors. Any man now distinguished from his fellows in the Church of Christ is necessarily but the officer of a particular Church, and he is in no way necessarily different from any other member of the Catholic Church beyond the limits of that Church. And of his office in this, the idea is very simple. He is characteristically only the Representative of its Authority and the Executive of its Will. He has not necessarily any power to rule, or any authority to teach. Indeed, in a Christian church there is no such thing as Rule as in a civil society, for there is no power in it to enforce obedience, but only to rebuke disobedience; no power to punish, but only to exclude. The subjects with which the Christian Church is conversant and its aims have the least possible to do with the exercise of power; most only with far subtler influences, with love and sympathy and mutual help. It is a brotherhood of worshipers; and neither with brotherhood nor with worship has government any necessary, much less any primary, connection. Service, not rule, is the characteristic of Christian honor. He is the greatest in the Church that serves the readiest. This is the new standard of Christ's gospel; this is the new spirit of Christ's commandment. The officers, then, of a Christian church, are simply a body of men who are willing to become their brethren's ministers—to take upon themselves additional labors and responsibilities for their brethren's benefit which they are not bound otherwise than through love to perform. And the characteristics of a Christian minister, ideally considered, are humility and kindness and self-denial. The whole worth and significance of his service is that it be done for the society's sake and not for his own. Having no interests to seek, but some to renounce; finding his wages mainly in his work; denying himself for the sake of others, and desiring not to be ministered unto but to minister; superior to his brethren only because more like his Lord, and honorable only in virtue of his humbleness—such is a Christian minister. He is not an authoritative teacher. He can be only what any member of the Church

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

may be, a reciter of a received symbol; an expositor, according to his own natural and spiritual perceptions of their significance, of oracles which are not necessarily any clearer to him than to his neighbors. In Christianity, indeed, there is little to be taught; its prime solicitude is not knowledge but worship; and thus a Christian minister's office is especially simple, requiring self-denial and humility more than any pre-eminence of intellectual attainments; a readiness to serve and to endure more than any ability to legislate or to rule."

With these testimonies the case against Sacerdotalism may be closed. We have seen that it is of the same parentage as that of Infant Baptism, and that both of these came from an erroneous conception of the Sacraments, as they are called in the language of ritualists. As Baptism chronologically stands first in the order of these Sacraments, we may safely conclude, as we have done, that Baptismal Regeneration is fundamental in all departures from the purity and simplicity of New Testament teaching wherein is set forth the faith and practice of the Primitive Church.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

THE EVIL OF INDIFFERENCE TO AUTHORITY.

The third and last great evil, growing out of Baptismal Regeneration, which it is proposed at present to consider, is what I have called indifference to authority, or carelessness as regards what our Divine Lord has certainly commanded, and what His apostles just as certainly practiced. Attention has already been called to some of the passages of Scripture which were no doubt helpful in evolving the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. But there is still another passage to which the doctrine may be almost directly traced. I refer to John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." This passage has been chiefly relied upon, through all ages of the Church, by those who have regarded baptism as absolutely an essential condition to salvation. Hence Baptismal Regeneration has found this passage one of its strongest citadels of defence. But the passage can not be made to do service for any

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

such doctrine unless it be illegitimately interpreted; and this is precisely what has happened not only as respects this passage, but also as respects all other passages of the New Testament that indicate a connection between Baptism and Remission of Sins, or salvation.

THE MEANING OF JOHN III. 5.

In view of the illicit use which has been made of John iii. 5, it may be well to examine briefly what our Lord really meant by the language there used; and if I take up a little extra space in an exposition of this passage, I think I may claim justification on the ground that the passage is somewhat fundamental as regards the question under discussion. First of all, it is important to get a correct rendering of the Greek. Every scholar knows that a literal translation will give us *born out of water and out of spirit*, instead of what we now have in both the Authorized and Revised Versions. This change helps us to arrive at the true meaning.

Now, if we turn to Romans vi. 4, we can scarcely fail to understand what is meant by being "born out of water and out of spirit." Evidently what Paul means by being raised into newness of life out of a watery grave is equivalent to what our Lord means by being

REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

“born out of water and out of spirit.” To be “born out of water” alone would not bring us to newness of life; but to be “born out of water and out of spirit” is equivalent to a death to sin, burial with Christ by baptism into death and a resurrection into newness of life. Hence I heartily agree with Dean Alford, that “born out of water” refers to baptism in water; while “out of spirit” indicates the vital connection between the Holy Spirit and the creation within us of the new life. I also agree with him when he adds: “All attempts to get rid of these two plain facts have sprung from doctrinal prejudices by which the views of expositors have been warped.”

Much light may be thrown upon this passage by remembering the particular standpoint of Nicodemus. He was undoubtedly acquainted with the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But John had said that, while he baptized in water, the One coming after him, *viz.*, the Christ, would baptize in the Holy Spirit. No doubt the object of Jesus was to impress this testimony of John upon Nicodemus. But He does not do this by *excluding* baptism in water, but by *adding* baptism in the Holy Spirit. In other words, He unites the two elements in the one baptism, and thereby makes baptism into

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit the one baptism of which Paul speaks when he is enumerating the seven unities in his letter to the Ephesians. Consequently, one must be born, not only out of water, but out of spirit also; and this corresponds with what our Lord said in His commission to the apostles, *viz.*, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And this view of the matter completely rescues the passage from any application to the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, while at the same time it emphasizes the importance of baptism in order to burial and resurrection with Christ.

There is still a further difficulty in this passage which needs to be cleared up. What is the meaning of the phrase "kingdom of God"? If it means the everlasting or heavenly kingdom, then it would logically follow that none but those who are born out of water and out of spirit can ever enter heaven. But surely this is not what our Lord meant, as doubtless many will enter heaven who never even heard of baptism of any kind whatever.

I can not now give the proof for my conclusion, but it would be easy to show from numerous parallel passages that the phrase "kingdom of God" refers to the reign of God on earth, from the opening of the kingdom on the day of Pen-

REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

tecost to the close of the Christian dispensation. Hence, Peter on the day of Pentecost, when the kingdom was first opened, told the inquiring Pentecostians that they must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; thus literalizing the metaphorical language of our Divine Lord, so that all could understand and comply with the terms of salvation. And if Peter's language at Pentecost is equivalent to our Lord's language to Nicodemus, then it is evident that the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration finds no standing ground in the teaching of the Word of God.

This view of the matter at once clears up several difficulties. Among these may be reckoned the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some have thought that this Baptism was special, and was never repeated after the conversion of Cornelius and his household. But 1 Cor. xii:13 stands right in the way of this conclusion. The proper translation of this passage is as follows: "For, in one Spirit also, were we all baptized into one body, etc." The Spirit in this case represents the element in which the act of Baptism takes place, but it does not exclude water as an element also. The Apostle is looking solely at the spiritual side and there-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

fore speaks only of Baptism in the Spirit. If the whole case were under consideration then it would include both water and Spirit, and this would correspond precisely with John iii:5, when the latter is entirely stripped of its metaphorical import.

This view of the matter is supported by a correct understanding of Matt. iii:11. A literal translation is as follows:

“I, indeed, am baptizing you in water, in order to repentance; but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.”

On the very surface of this passage there are at least three things apparent:

(1) Christ, during His reign, would introduce a new element in connection with baptism. It is not said that the new element would dispense with the old. On the contrary it seems to be implied that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is to be in some way *added* to that of water. The former is to be supplemental to the latter. Nor is it necessary to reckon with two distinct baptisms. The leading word is the same in both cases; only the noun of the adjunct changes. And the fact that “baptize” is used before both elements suggests the probability that the baptism was to be regarded as ONE while the two elements—water and

REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

spirit—would be associated in the “one baptism.”

(2) The baptism in water was administered by John, that in the Spirit, by Christ. That is, the spiritual element could not be of human origin—it must come from above. This fact strongly suggests a parallel between the passage under consideration and John iii:3-5. The birth from above may be equivalent to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I do not say that this is certainly so; but I do say that there are good reasons for believing that if all metaphor was stripped from the language the two passages would be seen to mean practically the same thing. But however this may be, the important point to which special attention is directed still remains, viz.: the baptism in the Holy Spirit is Christ's work and not that of man; and consequently, if the two elements are to be regarded as belonging to the “one baptism,” then undoubtedly the Divine element is “from above,” and is supplied by Christ Himself; so that while the human agent baptizes in water, Christ at the same time baptizes in the Holy Spirit. This fact also shows how certainly the human and the Divine co-operate in the most vital part of Christianity.

(3) A third important matter is suggested by the language of the text in Matt. iii:11.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

There is no such thing as "water baptism," or "spirit baptism." Nor are the phrases "baptism *of* water," or "baptism *of* the Holy Spirit" to be found anywhere in the Bible; and this is not only the language of Ashdod, but it is wholly misleading. "Baptism *of* the Holy Spirit" conveys an entirely different meaning from that conveyed by "baptism *in* the Holy Spirit." The former can not be found in the word of God; nor can the idea it conveys be found there. The biblical language is always "baptize *in* or with water," and "baptize *in* or with the Holy Spirit." Now anyone ought to see that these phrases express a very different idea from those to which I object. In the objectionable phrases, the leading terms are "water" and "Spirit." The "baptism *of* water" indicates that the baptism is really something that belongs to the water or proceeds from the water, and consequently teaches not only an unscriptural notion, but also expresses a wholly unphilosophical idea. The same is true of the phrase baptism *of* the Holy Spirit. It represents the baptism as coming from the Spirit instead of from Christ. But this is not the teaching of the New Testament. The truth is, the leading idea is always the baptism, and not the Spirit, which is only the element in which the baptism takes place.

REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

It is easy to see how a misconception, such as I have indicated, would have a vicious influence on the thoughts of the religious world. By using such phrases as "water baptism" and "baptism *of* water" the people would soon come to attach little or no importance to baptism in water, for the reason that "water baptism" and "baptism *of* water" puts the emphasis in the wrong place, and consequently begets the notion that baptism in water may be dispensed with entirely, or attended to in any kind of fashion, if only the "baptism *of* the Holy Ghost" can be secured. This latter phrase magnifies the importance of the baptism *in* the Spirit, because it wholly misrepresents the facts of the case. But it is not the *element* that is the leading thought in the scriptural language; it is the *action* and that action is called baptism, whether the element is water, or spirit, or both. Hence I conclude that the popular phraseology on this subject is entirely unscriptural and misleading. There is really no such thing as "water baptism," or "spirit baptism," nor is there anything in the word of God that even corresponds to "baptism *of* water" or "baptism *of* the Holy Spirit." Such language only shows the confusion of Christendom, and serves to illustrate how easy

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

it is for even the most conscientious people to drift away from a pure speech.

Having now cleared the ground, is it possible to determine with definite certainty the exact meaning of the passage under consideration? Let us see.

Of course there are those who find only two instances of baptism in the Holy Spirit—at Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius. No doubt these were special cases, but I doubt the conclusion that these are the only instances where the baptism in the Holy Spirit took place. As already suggested, in 1 Cor. 12:13, the Apostle seems to declare that the Corinthians had all been baptized in one Spirit into one body. This baptism may not have been accompanied by such signs as were present at Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius; but this would prove little or nothing as to the point in controversy. The *gift* of the Holy Spirit did not always carry with it the same *manifestation* of the Spirit.

From Acts 19:2-6, it is evident that baptism in water was closely associated with the Holy Spirit, and may we not reasonably conclude that the element—Spirit—was *added* to baptism in water after John's baptism had wrought its mission? Hence when Peter told the Pentecostians to "repent and be baptized, every

REACTION FROM BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

one of them in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," he was simply asking them to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and this formula made it impossible for anyone to be baptized and not hear of the Holy Spirit. No wonder Paul asked the disciples he found at Ephesus, "Into what, then, were you baptized?" He could not understand how they could have received Christian baptism and not hear of the Holy Spirit, since the name of the Holy Spirit was used in the baptismal formula. And Paul's reference to what John the Baptist said strongly suggests the baptism in the Spirit as one side at least of this case at Ephesus.

We may conclude, therefore, that it is not necessary to limit the baptism in the Holy Spirit to two or three occasions, or even to the apostolic age. It seems to me to be more in harmony with the whole scope of the Scripture teaching on the subject, to regard baptism in the Holy Spirit as a part of every baptism, either immediately associated with the baptism in water, or else closely following it. Nor is this baptism to be repeated any more than baptism in water is to be repeated. Indeed, if the two elements are to be regarded as belonging to the

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

“one baptism” of which Paul speaks in Ephesians, then the modern notion of praying for a “rebaptism of the Holy Ghost” is entirely unauthorized by anything to be found in the word of God.

Hence, I believe there is a sense in which it is proper to say that there is still a baptism in the Holy Spirit, though this is followed by no such manifestations as took place at Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius. In short, the *one* Baptism of which Paul speaks is a Baptism in two elements, *viz.*: water and spirit. But the antecedent conditions necessary to a Scriptural Baptism must all be present before the act of Baptism can be worth anything whatever. This fact makes Baptismal Regeneration, in the evangelical sense of Regeneration, both absurd and impossible, and, therefore, a mere theological figment without either reason or Scripture to support it.

Nevertheless, this doctrine has been evolved out of the very passage (John iii:5) to which I have called attention, and has been the most popular doctrine of the Church concerning regeneration from Barnabas down to our present day.

CHAPTER VIII.

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM.

Just here it may be well to guard against a possible misconception of the facts of the case. Let no one suppose that a misunderstanding of the design of baptism necessarily implies that it has no place in the Christian system. Unfortunately this is the extreme to which some have gone while seeking to avoid the extreme of baptismal regeneration. As a matter of fact, baptism is founded in the deepest philosophy of the universe, and is easily defensible upon the ground that it is perfectly rational as a means to an end. It is, therefore, the extreme use of baptism which is objectionable, and not its proper use, as it is ordained in the plan of salvation.

Doubtless Ritual holds an important place in the Divine government. This would seem to be necessary, owing to the very constitution of man's nature. He is not wholly a spiritual being. He has a body as well as a soul and spirit; and this body must be taken into account in all the affairs of the present life. This is so much the case that even his language has a physical basis. This very fact constitutes one of the

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

difficulties in making a revelation to him of spiritual things; and in view of this fact it is very remarkable that spiritual things have been brought so near to him in the revelation which God has made through the Bible. The Divine Revealer was compelled to use the language which he found men were speaking; and yet this language was the product of an evolution through the ages, strongly influenced by purely physical needs, and also deeply contaminated with sin. To make a perfect revelation through such a language, and to such a being as man is, was the task set before the Divine mind; and undoubtedly only Divine wisdom could possibly have performed such a task as has been accomplished.

Taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case it is not at all singular that there should be in human nature a strong tendency toward ritualism. The eye perceives before the ear comprehends. The eye is that which takes cognizance of the physical, the ear is that which apprehends the spiritual. Hence, it is perfectly philosophical that faith should come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

The antiquity of ritual is a strong proof that it rests upon solid ground. If we examine the Holy Scriptures, we shall find that it existed in

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

different forms from the very earliest ages, and that, in many instances, at least, it had the Divine approval. As an instance, it is only necessary to mention the Sabbath, and the peculiar conditions surrounding its observance. However, other cases might be given under each of the three dispensations, namely, the Patriarchal, Jewish and Christian.

But it is unnecessary to burden these pages by enumerating the numerous places where ritual can be found. It is sufficient to say that Baptism and the Lord's Supper occupy the most prominent, if not the only place, in the Church of God. Evidently it was the intention of the Divine Founder of Christianity to make it as free from ritual as possible, and yet it was necessary to tie the religion of Christ (so to speak) to at least three great outward institutions, namely, Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the Lord's day. These all represent respectively important facts, as well as stand for great principles. Nor is it easy to see how Christianity could have become a permanent reality in the world without some such outward institutions as those to which reference has been made.

We must not, therefore, undervalue the importance of baptism simply because its true meaning has been perverted. The constant

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

tendency of the human mind toward ritualism will easily account for the early perversion of the ordinance. The first step in this perversion was the confounding of the *sign* with that which was *signified*. The same mistake still underlies the doctrine of baptism, as it is practically held by probably nineteen-twentieths of professed Christians. Because God made use of an outward ordinance, or a physical sign, through which to convey a blessing or signify that blessing, it does not follow that the blessing is imparted, *ex opere operato*, on that account. When the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, it was not because there was in this serpent itself the power to heal them, but because God commanded them to do this thing, and the healing power came with their obedience to the command. Doubtless the selection of the brazen serpent was altogether appropriate, and perhaps the wisest remedy that could have been suggested by divine wisdom; for we must believe, reasoning *a priori*, that God would select the very best means that could be found to bring about the desired result; and if the *similia similibus curantur* be true, then undoubtedly the selection of the brazen serpent was in harmony with a law of healing. But in any case it must be evident that the real power to heal was behind the

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

sign or brazen serpent, and that it was used only to signify the place where God would meet the diseased Israelites and heal them.

Equally suggestive is the case where the Saviour used clay in curing the blind man. No one for a moment would think that the power to heal was in the clay; and yet the Saviour used clay as a means through which His healing power might be manifested. Doubtless He could have restored the sight of the blind man without any such method, but we must always reckon with the divine way of doing things, and a robust faith will accept this way as the wisest in any given case.

While, therefore, it is not difficult to see why baptism occupies an important place in the plan of salvation, we must not forget that it is very easy to pervert such an ordinance from its legitimate purpose to one which degrades both the ordinance and its author. This is precisely what has happened with those who preach and practice Baptismal Regeneration. At the same time the facts stated help to explain how the ordinance of baptism was so decidedly perverted soon after the close of the apostolic ministry; and they help us also to understand how even many modern Churches still cling to a notion which is the parent of the most dominant evils to

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

be found in the teaching and practice of modern Christianity, the most prominent of which evils is probably infant baptism.

A misunderstanding as to what baptism really is, lies at the foundation of all the error with respect to its place in the plan of salvation.

It may appear to some like sacrilege to question the propriety of the old distinction between what are called moral and positive institutions or commands. With the religious body known as Disciples, at least, this distinction has come to be a sort of inheritance. In all their literature, from the first number of the *Christian Baptist* down to the last issue of any book or paper, advocating the return to apostolic Christianity, we find this distinction more or less insisted upon as essential to any correct understanding of the plan of salvation. In some instances, books and pamphlets are chiefly occupied with emphasizing and enforcing its importance, as the key which unlocks all the apparent difficulties connected with regeneration or conversion. In fact, a considerable library could be collected on this subject, and one, too, that would be highly prized by many faithful disciples of Jesus.

Of course we ought not to seek to injure the value of all this literature, without good

and sufficient cause. And I can assure the reader that nothing but a deep sense of obligation to truth could induce me to call in question the reasoning of so many true, earnest and able men. Nevertheless, as my convictions will not permit me longer to hold to the popular notion, I do not hesitate to assert my independence of the past and proceed to give reasons for the hope that is within me.

1. The distinction referred to was never supported by any real Scripture authority. It has always rested on a pure assumption. I do not say that the assumption is wholly arbitrary, for it is freely admitted that in some cases there seems to be a reason for it. But a little reflection, I think, will enable us to see that in no instance is the distinction justifiable.

2. Theologians have been very generally fond of this distinction, and it is from these the Disciples, as a people, have inherited it, and not from the Bible. Butler, in his "Analogy," says: "*Moral* duties arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command. *Positive* duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command." Bishop Whately is equally explicit. He says: "A *positive* precept concerns a thing that is right because it is commanded; a *moral* respects a thing commanded because it is right.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

A Jew was bound to honor his parents, and also to worship at Jerusalem; the former was commanded because it was right, and the latter was right because it was commanded."

In these extracts we have a very clear statement of the distinction to which I object. Let us now see if the distinction itself is founded in any proper understanding of the divine government.

How do we know that "positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case," but only from "external command"? May it not be that our *ignorance* is the only thing that hinders a different understanding of this matter? Because we do not perceive the "nature of the case" "prior to the external command," does it necessarily follow that there is no fitness, no proper connection between duty and the thing commanded? I beg the reader's close attention just here.

It is true that a Jew was bound to obey his parents, and that he was commanded to do this because it was right; but is it not equally true that he was commanded to worship at Jerusalem because it was right also? The reason for this latter may not be as self-evident as the reason for the former, but it does not follow, therefore, that the latter is without reason—a mere arbitrary command of God. What we

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

contend for is, that one is just as reasonable as the other when the difference in *class* is taken into the account. It is certainly right *in itself* that children should obey their parents, but does not the same sense of fitness underlie the command to the Jew to worship at Jerusalem? This city was the capital of the Jewish people. Their nationality centered at that point. As regards *place*, it stood related to the nation precisely as the parents stand related to their children in respect to *authority*. And in "the nature of the case," it was just as appropriate to select Jerusalem as the city in which the Jew was to worship as to command children to obey their parents. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Jewish religion was national in its character, and a central place to worship would appear to be essential to the kind of worship enjoined upon the Jew. Hence it will be seen that the place selected for the temple was in harmony with the highest reason, and consequently Bishop Whately's example in no way justifies the distinction between moral and positive law.

Nor shall we find any better support for this distinction if we turn to other examples usually relied on. The most common illustrations are the prohibition in the Garden of Eden; the offering of Isaac by Abraham; the lifting up of

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

the brazen serpent in the wilderness; the command of God to Uzzah concerning the ark; the healing of Naaman by Elisha; and the ordinance of baptism. But in our judgment, not one of these will yield an interpretation contrary to my position when the *facts are all understood*. It may be that we never will be able to fully comprehend the philosophy of all these cases, but our ignorance should not be accepted as conclusive that there is no philosophy at all in them, and that, therefore, their selection was a purely arbitrary matter. We are persuaded that in every case precisely the *right thing* was commanded, and that it would not have been *commanded*, had it not been *right in itself*. In other words, it was right and proper *prior* to the command, and was not made so by an arbitrary act of divine power.

It may be said that in the case of Abraham offering Isaac the act was *wrong in itself*. Very well, but did the *command of God make it right*? We think not. For we can not conceive how even God himself can destroy the distinction between right and wrong. This distinction is eternal, and no power in the universe can obliterate it. Hence, for this very reason doubtless, Abraham was not allowed to take the life of his son. It was not the purpose of God that the command should be liter-

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

erally obeyed; and so I think Paul reasons when he makes this case typical of the offering of Christ.

The old distinction between moral and positive law is an unfortunate one. We come now to inquire, in what respect it is unfortunate.

Of course any distinction that is not true ought not to stand, even if no evil tendency can be detected. Truth only is consistent with truth; and it is only truth that will bear the final test. Hence we should contend for the truth for its own sake, if for no other reason. But in the present case there are evil tendencies which can be overcome only by breaking down the distinction to which I have called attention. We can now notice only a few of these.

One tendency is to form a false idea of the ordinance of baptism. It is assumed that baptism is a positive institution according to the old definition, and is, therefore, *right* simply because it is *commanded*, without any antecedent relation to the purpose or end for which it is commanded. It is boldly asserted that there is absolutely no connection whatever between the nature of the ordinance and the design of it, and that this is the very reason why it was selected as a test of our faith.

But the truth is baptism is not simply a test of our faith. In some sense it may be this,

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

but it is more than this. Doubtless it may be likened to a thermometer which measures the heat in the room. The thermometer is not the heat, it only measures the heat. Baptism is not faith, but it may measure faith. In so far as this is the case it may be regarded as a test of faith. It tries our faith. When our faith is high enough to impel us to action, then we have the faith that saves, and this is why baptism is said to save us. It is the point on the thermometer which marks the degree where faith is strong enough to go forward and do exactly what God has commanded us, and this clearly indicates the point where salvation is assured.

Nor should the ordinance be reduced to a mere arbitrary sign in order to define its position in the plan of salvation. It is more than a sign. It is doubtless that, but it is more than that. But whatever it is, it is undoubtedly reasonable and appropriate, and is certainly the wisest and best means which divine wisdom could select for meeting the object which that wisdom had in view. We must, therefore, regard it as an ordinance beautifully appropriate, eminently proper, and thoroughly adapted to the purposes for which it has been appointed.

This view of the matter seems to increase the

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

binding force of baptism rather than to make it less forcible, as some have supposed. We must, therefore, contend for its reasonableness, for this at once emphasizes its importance.

I have heard preachers say that if God had commanded us to break a straw this would have answered just as well as to be baptized. Perhaps so; but God would not have commanded us to do that which is not philosophically correct. Hence the case is not a supposable one. As everything in the universe has its proper place, and nothing else can fill that place, without disturbing the general equilibrium, is it too much to say that God himself could not substitute anything for baptism without endangering the harmony of His moral government? And if this be true, then the importance of baptism is greatly increased rather than diminished by doing away with the old distinction between Moral and Positive institutions. If the same amount of intellectual force that has been expended in proving baptism an arbitrary command had been devoted to the establishment of its reasonableness and philosophical fitness, the significance and value of the ordinance would, in my opinion, be much more appreciated than they now are; and in view of this fact I plead for a thorough revision of the old definition on this subject.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

Another tendency of the error we are considering is, to furnish weapons for the defense of infidelity. The chief attack of modern infidels on the Christian religion is from the scientific standpoint. This, in my judgment, is their last stronghold; and when fairly driven from this the contest will be practically ended.

Now, while I do not deem it necessary to scientifically demonstrate everything connected with the Christian religion in order to establish its claim to a divine origin, it is certainly neither wisdom nor piety to expend our strength in trying to prove that some of the important ordinances of that religion are wholly *unscientific*. If we are not able to show the *reason why* this or that is commanded, it is surely no part of our duty to set up a claim that there is no reason in the matter, except the sovereign act of the divine will. And it is obviously still less our duty to contend that any command is *contrary to reason* and is all the more important on that account.

We have been accustomed to say that a miracle is something *above* reason, but not *contrary* to reason. Can we not be at least this considerate when discussing the ordinances of Christianity?

Our contention for the reasonableness of baptism will do much to overthrow infant baptism,

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

which we have already seen is wholly unreasonable. The more we concede to the old notion that baptism is a Positive institution, and is wholly arbitrary in its nature, the more we make it impossible to educate the public mind against the dogma of infant baptism, which finds its main support in that peculiar magical claim which it sets up, wherein baptism becomes the antidote for original sin. When we can once place the ordinance on rational grounds, then the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration will no longer be tenable, and consequently infant baptism will have its main prop taken from under it; for no matter what may be said to the contrary, it is a fact, which cannot be successfully refuted, that, without the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, infant baptism has really no *locus standi*.

In this connection, it is worth while to remark that it would be easy to show by abundant quotations that every argument which has been used to support infant baptism has been refuted by its most determined advocates. Indeed, it is quite possible to overthrow the dogma from every point of view by arguments supplied by Pedobaptists themselves while attempting to find the most favorable ground for its support. Surely a practice which is constantly discounted by its best friends cannot

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

strongly appeal to the faith of the Christian world unless the Christian world is swayed by a blind superstition, or, at least, a powerful tradition which refuses to listen to the voice of either reason or revelation. Nevertheless, the practice still continues, and this fact shows conclusively that the traditions on which it is founded cannot easily be swept away, and for the reason that they appeal to the deepest and most permanent affections of human nature, viz., the affections growing out of the relation between parents and their children.

MAKING TOO LITTLE OF BAPTISM.

As already intimated, the reaction against the extreme of sacramental grace has led to another extreme equally dangerous, if not to be dreaded even more than the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. This extreme shows itself in making little or nothing of baptism whatever. It practically strips the ordinance of all legitimate significance, and makes it a cold, formal performance, with nothing to recommend it in any way as a practical and important factor in the plan of salvation.

This evil is widespread, for it cannot be denied that many earnest men and women, who cannot possibly believe in the doctrine of

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

Baptismal Regeneration, have gone to another extreme in making baptism practically of no importance whatever, by reducing it to a mere bodily act. That extremes beget extremes is the testimony of all history. When a pendulum is lifted considerably above the point of oscillation on one side, and is then let fall, it is sure to swing to the opposite extreme on the other side. This is precisely what has happened with respect to the matter of baptism. Baptismal Regeneration expresses one extreme, while indifference to baptism expresses the other extreme. The advocates of the first, making too much of baptism, have driven the anti-ritualists into the extreme of making too little of baptism. Hence, it is now lamentably true that those who hold to the doctrine of what is called evangelical regeneration regard baptism as in no sense connected with salvation.

But there can be no doubt about the fact that this extreme is not much better than the other extreme, from which this one is evidently a rebound. But neither of these extremes can be accepted as in harmony with what Scripture saith; for while Baptismal Regeneration cannot possibly be true (if regeneration is limited to the work of the Holy Spirit in begetting in us the new life), it is equally certain that indiffer-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

ence to baptism cannot be in accordance with the will of God when we come to consider the obligations involved in all that belongs to the salvation of the sinner. Such passages as I have already quoted, where baptism is mentioned, must mean something; and in our judgment the true meaning cannot be determined by rushing from one extreme to another. In the Scriptures salvation is ascribed to several things. Among these may be mentioned grace, faith, calling on the name of the Lord, hope, the life of Christ, the washing of regeneration, and baptism. Peter says, "*Baptism doth also now save us*"; and while that statement stands unchallenged in the Word of God, no one can truthfully say that baptism does not save us in any sense. Surely it does not save us in the same sense as grace saves us, or as faith saves us, or as any of the other means to which salvation is ascribed saves us; but that it does save us in *some sense* is just as certain as that the Word of God is true.

And now, regarding the two extremes to which attention has been called, it is my deliberate judgment that our safety lies between them. At the same time we cannot fail to notice that the evil of indifference to baptism has practically come out of Baptismal Regeneration. Can safety be found in a middle course?

A REASONABLE VIEW OF BAPTISM

I feel confident that it can, and I shall now briefly indicate what the middle course is, which will meet all the conditions of the case.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION.

It is believed that a practical solution of this difficult problem may be found in at least three directions. In the first place, we may limit regeneration to the antecedent work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, in producing faith and begetting in us the new life, and then allow that baptism may take the place of a covenant, or *Sacramentum*, in which the believer takes upon himself the obligations of the Divine government, while at the same time he receives the assurance of pardon by relying upon the testimony, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In the second place, the term "regeneration" may be regarded as including everything belonging to the new birth, or the return of the sinner to God; and in this case baptism would be properly the *consummating* act of all that is involved in the change, or the decisive act by which the believing penitent definitely takes up his cross to follow Christ. This view would seem to be in harmony with Peter's teaching (1 Peter 3:21) that baptism is the "answer (Greek, *decision*,) of a good conscience towards God." Hence it

HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION

is the act by which the penitent believer definitely and fully accepts Christ and takes his position on the Lord's side. Or, in the third place, we need not concern ourselves with any special *theory* of either regeneration or baptism, but simply insist upon all that the Lord has commanded, without formulating anything whatever.

This last is, in my judgment, the safest course to pursue, and consequently this is the course I would most earnestly recommend in order to Christian union. From almost the very beginning of the Christian era down to the present time speculations and theories with regard to baptism have been a perpetual source of discord and strife, and even now there really seems little hope of peace while we are engaged in adding to or taking from the Word of God. In my judgment, it is quite useless to think seriously of Christian union until the baptismal question is solved; and it seems to me that no satisfactory solution will be reached unless we are willing to take a practical view of the whole matter by simply following the plain teaching of the Scriptures.

But I am thankful there is a sure way to peace, and this is by recognizing the supreme authority of our Lord Jesus Christ in this matter as in all other things. He has evidently

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

spoken definitely upon the baptismal question. There can be no doubt about the fact that he commanded it. Indeed, he himself submitted to baptism in order that he might fulfill all righteousness, or ratify every Divine institution. Ought we not to be as loyal to him as he was to his Father? Surely if we call him Lord, Lord, we ought to do the things which he says. And if, when he tells us to be baptized, we willingly submit to the ordinance, it does not matter much whether we understand its whole meaning or not. When the Israelites were told to look to the brazen serpent and be healed, it is by no means certain that any of them understood the philosophy of the Lord's appointment; but all the same, both safety and loyalty required implicit obedience to what had been divinely commanded.

No one supposes that Naaman understood the secret of Divine healing when, in obedience to the commandment of Elisha, he dipped seven times in the River Jordan; and yet he could not have been healed had he not done what the prophet told him to do. Is not this, after all, the best way to treat the question of baptism? The Lord has commanded it, and his apostles everywhere practiced it. Is not this a sufficient reason why we should attend to

HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION

it as soon as we heartily believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Surely there is no need for hair-splitting on this question any more than other questions which have furnished such a battle-ground for Christians of all ages. Loyalty is what our Divine King wants, and this can only be given to him by a hearty submission to his will whenever and wherever that will is made known. This, I believe, is the only sure solution of the Baptismal question; and as this question lies at the very basis of all feasible plans for permanent Christian union, I most earnestly hope that all who love our Lord and Master, and would surrender everything in order to honor him, will from this day forward determine, by the help of God, to be true to Christ's commandments, even though this should involve submission to the Divine ordinance of believers' baptism.

SUMMING UP THE CASE.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the extreme reaction from Baptismal Regeneration has produced many evils. Indeed, what we have called Indifferentism has been a prolific source of apostasy from the faith and practice of the Primitive Church. A few of the evil

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

consequences may be enumerated as follows:

(1) Indifferentism has opened the door for nearly all kinds of neglect.

(2) It discounts the Lord's Supper as well as baptism. The two ordinances must stand or fall together. Indifference to one necessarily begets indifference to the other.

(3) It gives license to a false exegesis by taking liberties with the Word of God. It leaves out what is clearly commanded, and substitutes what is just as clearly not commanded. It teaches that salvation is by faith only, and suppresses the word "baptism" whenever it is necessary to do so in order to protest against any association of baptism with remission of sins.

(4) It confounds regeneration and forgiveness of sins, and assumes that when salvation is spoken of in the Word of God it always necessarily refers to the work of grace on the heart; whereas the word salvation is used in several senses in the New Testament.

(5) It makes the plea for Scriptural baptism practically useless; for if baptism has no important significance, and is in no way connected with salvation, it certainly makes little or no difference when or how it is administered. If it really amounts to nothing, it is evident that very few will be concerned whether it is admin-

HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION

istered in infancy or to believers, or whether by sprinkling or immersion. But the moment baptism is restored to its rightful place, that moment will the proper subject and action become exceedingly important.

(6) It destroys one of the most efficient practical helps in evangelistic work. Whatever may be said of baptism on other grounds, it cannot be doubted that it is a most important instrumentality in bringing the believer to definite decision. In dealing with earnest inquirers we are sure to reach a point where some decided act is necessary to fix the position of those who have given their hearts to the Lord. Nothing can take the place of baptism in meeting this emergency. In our judgment, modern evangelism has lost very much by the indifference to baptism which has come out of the extreme reaction from Baptismal Regeneration.

(7) Finally, it cultivates disloyalty to Christ. If we can be indifferent to his command with respect to baptism, we may be equally indifferent to all his other commands. Who shall elect which of our Lord's commands may be neglected with impunity? And yet when we begin to talk about non-essentials among those things which he has unquestionably authorized, we at once begin to talk about disloyalty to Him who has all authority in heaven and in

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

earth. No doubt Baptismal Regeneration is a dangerous doctrine, but its opposite extreme, indifference to baptism, is equally dangerous. In our judgment, the only safety is the middle ground which I have advocated in this chapter.

DANGER OF BEING MISUNDERSTOOD.

However, I am not unmindful of the danger to which I am exposing myself by choosing the middle ground between two extremes. I know how difficult it is to satisfy extremists unless we go the whole length of their position. Hence it is quite probable that what I have said against Baptismal Regeneration will receive the condemnation of those who make *too much* of baptism, and it is equally probable that what I have said in favor of the Scriptural doctrine of a connection between baptism and remission of sins will receive the condemnation of those who make *too little* of baptism. Indeed, it is quite probable that these last will charge me with favoring the notion of Baptismal Regeneration, notwithstanding the fact that my position necessarily tears up, root and branch, that pernicious doctrine, and practically annihilates the only ground upon which it can possibly rest. And it seems to me that this ought to be clear to the vision of even those who are so blind that they will not see.

HOW TO SOLVE THE QUESTION

My position makes a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of life, indispensable prerequisites of baptism; and consequently, if regeneration is limited to the work of the Holy Spirit in begetting the new life within us, then, on the grounds of my advocacy, Baptismal Regeneration is simply impossible, for all I care to claim for baptism necessarily follows what is claimed for regeneration in the popular understanding of that term. This position has legitimate regard for both the antecedents and consequents of baptism, refusing alike to place *too much* or *too little* value upon the ordinance.

CHAPTER X.

MODERN TESTIMONIES CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM.

It is a significant fact that some of the ablest theologians of modern times, while rejecting the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, have at the same time maintained with great vigor the connection of baptism with salvation. From three of these writers quotations are subjoined. The views of Alexander Campbell on this question have often been sadly perverted by those who were not able to controvert them from a Scriptural point of view. Nevertheless, taking Regeneration, in the popular currency of the word, Mr. Campbell has opposed Baptismal Regeneration with all the power his pen and tongue could command. He has persistently and with great ability contended that without the preliminary conditions involved in the popular notion of Regeneration, baptism is really worth nothing at all. But with these prerequisites baptism is the consummating act of the sinner's return to God. The following extract ought to be conclusive as regards this matter:

"Baptism is, therefore, no work of law, no moral duty, no moral righteousness, but a simple putting on of Christ

MODERN TESTIMONIES

and placing ourselves wholly in his hand and under his guidance. It is an open, sensible, voluntary expression of our faith in Christ, a visible embodiment of faith, to which, as being thus perfected, the promise of remission of sins is divinely annexed. In one word, *it is faith perfected*. Hence, when Paul exegetically develops its blessings, he says, 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our Lord.' Thus, justification, sanctification and adoption—the three most precious gifts of the Gospel—are evangelically connected with faith in the Lord Jesus and baptism into his death.

"The immediate baptism of the first converts, after faith, is satisfactorily explained in this view of it: three thousand in one day believed and were baptized. The jailer and his family were enlightened, believed, and were baptized the same hour of the night. Paul himself, so soon as he had recovered from the influence of the supernatural brightness which deprived him of sight, and before he had eaten or drunk anything, was commanded, without further delay, to be forthwith baptized. 'And he arose and was baptized.' Baptism, with them, was the perfecting, or confession, of their faith. The Ethiopian eunuch, on his journey in the desert, is as striking an example of this as are the cases named. It was 'putting on Christ' as their righteousness.

"Baptism, without faith, is of no value whatever; for, in truth, baptism is but the actual and symbolic profession of faith. It is its legitimate embodiment and consummation. And whatever virtue there is in it, or connected with it, is but the virtue of faith in the blood of Christ applied to the conscience and to the heart. The burial in water is a burial with Christ and in Christ. 'For in him shall all the seed of Israel,' the believing children of Abraham, 'be justified,' and in him, 'and not in themselves, shall they glory.' It is, then, the sensible and experimental deliverance from both the guilt and the pollution of sin; and for this reason, or in this view of it, believing penitents, when

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

inquiring *what they should do*, were uniformly commanded by the ambassadors of Christ to be 'baptized for the remission of sins,' as God's own way, under the New Institution, of receiving sinners into favor, through the death, burial and resurrection of his Son, into whose name especially, as well as by whose mediatorial authority, they were commanded to be, on confession, buried in baptism.

"Salvation, in the aggregate, is all of grace; and all the parts of it are, consequently, gracious. Nor do we, in truth, in obeying the Gospel, or in being buried in baptism, make void either law or Gospel, but establish and confirm both."—*Christian Baptist*, pages 284, 285.

The main objection to these views should be made, in our judgment, against the assumption that baptism is no "moral duty." Mr. Campbell recognized the old distinction between Positive and Moral law, and hence it was easy for him to regard baptism as simply a Positive institution without any moral significance in it, *per se*. In this I think he was wrong, and in so far, I think his assumptions weaken his otherwise splendid argument. Nevertheless, the extract quoted not only vindicates Mr. Campbell from the taint of Baptismal Regeneration, but it also shows conclusively the importance of Christian baptism from a Scriptural point of view.

The next witness to be heard is the Rev. Joseph Agar Beet. In his work on Baptism, already quoted in another part of this volume, Dr. Beet gives the following emphatic testi-

MODERN TESTIMONIES

mony to the importance of the ordinance. He says:

"In the last words of Christ recorded in the First Gospel, words spoken apparently only to the eleven apostles, we have the formal appointment of baptism as an abiding rite of the Church: '*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them.*' This does not mean, according to the more probable reading, that baptism was to be the method of making disciples, but simply that while gathering learners for the school of Christ the apostles were to baptize them, and also to teach them whatever Christ had commanded. The accompanying promise proclaims clearly that the rite was designed to continue *to the end of the world.*

"With these words of Christ, those recorded in Mark 16:16 agree so completely that it is almost needless to inquire whether they originally formed part of the Second Gospel. By solemnly ordaining baptism our Lord made it obligatory on all who seek his favor, and thus made it a condition of salvation. For we cannot enjoy his smile while we refuse to obey his express command. We therefore do not wonder to find that in this passage salvation is promised only to those who both believe the Gospel and confess their faith by receiving baptism: '*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*' The absolute rigor of the second condition is somewhat softened by its absence from the latter clause, '*He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.*' In view of this command, thousands in all ages and countries, seeking salvation, have received the sacred rite at great cost and peril. They have dared thus to confess Christ in joyful confidence that he will confess them before his Father in heaven.

"Very humbly and reverently we now ask, 'Why did Christ, in full view of the tremendous loss and peril it would in many cases involve, require this formal confession? Why did he, in a spiritual religion, ordain an out-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

ward rite as a condition of salvation?' A partial answer is not far to seek. Christ ordained and required the outward rite of baptism in order that Christianity might assume visible form before men and present to the world a united front, and in order that his servants might recognize each other, and thus be able to stand shoulder to shoulder in the great conflict, strengthened by mutual counsel and encouragement. For this end he required his servants to confess him, and ordained baptism as a specific mode of confession.

"Similarly, among other reasons, Christ ordained the Lord's Supper, the one recurrent rite of his Church, in order to maintain in it unity, and the strength of unity.

"The above exposition will shed light upon, and receive support from, all other references to baptism in the New Testament.

"We understand now the startling exhortation of Ananias to Saul of Tarsus recorded in Acts 22:16: '*Arise and baptize thyself and wash away thy sins.*' These strong words evidently mean, 'Remove the stain of thy sins by the water of baptism.' Ananias knew that Christ had expressly ordained and commanded the rite, and had thus made it a condition of his favor and of the salvation he proclaimed. Therefore, for the repentant persecutor, there was no forgiveness and purification except by formal confession of Christ in baptism. Now, to our thought, a condition performed in order to attain a result dependent upon it is a means to that end. Consequently, Ananias could speak, and in this passage does speak, of baptism as a means of salvation.

"The strange occurrence here of the middle voice, *baptize thyself*, reminds us that in his baptism Saul was himself the most conspicuous actor. Somewhat similar, but without any reference to baptism, the persons addressed being already baptized, are St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 7:1: '*Let us cleanse ourselves.*' So 1 John 3:3: '*He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.*' By faith we claim the purity which, through the death of Christ, the

MODERN TESTIMONIES

Spirit of God works in those who believe. For faith is the condition on which that purity is given. Therefore, in this correct sense, we are exhorted to purify ourselves.

"The passage just expounded sheds light upon Titus 3:5. Long after his own baptism at Damascus, St. Paul wrote to this Gentile convert, '*God saved us by means of the laver (or bath) of the New Birth.*' And we have no need to deny a reference here to the rite of baptism. The words which follow, '*renewing by the Holy Spirit,*' remind us that these persons were *born of water and Spirit*.

"These last words are from the lips of Christ speaking to Nicodemus, as recorded in John 3:5. And they are easily explained. This member of the Sanhedrim, a Pharisee, and apparently (see verse 4) an old man, shrank from the public confession involved in the water of baptism. But in these words the *teacher sent from God* reminds him that the New Birth wrought by the Spirit, without which none can see the kingdom of God, is only for those who confess Christ in his appointed way, that even for Nicodemus there was no way into the kingdom except through the gate of baptism. The *water* is mentioned first as that which presented to Nicodemus the chief obstacle to salvation. It is mentioned only once, while the *Spirit* occurs in verses 5-8 three times, because he is the active Personal Agent, whereas baptism is only a condition of the New Birth.

"In complete harmony with Mark 16:16 are two other well-known references to baptism. In Galatians 3:26, St. Paul declares that his readers *are all sons of God through faith*, and at once supports his words by saying that by their baptism, which he assumes all to have received, they *have put on Christ*, and therefore, like him, are sons of God. He thus links together baptism and (see chapter 4:5) adoption into the family of God. But the baptism referred to is, as the order of the verses proves, a confession of personal faith. This connection of faith and baptism is equally conspicuous in Colossians 2:12, where the apostle teaches that they who have been '*buried with Christ in*

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

baptism' have also been 'raised together with him by means of their faith in the energy of God who raised him from the dead.' Similar teaching in Romans 6:4: 'We were buried with him by means of baptism for death.'

"In Acts 10:47, 48 is recorded the baptism of some who had already received the Holy Spirit. This proves that the outward rite was needful even for those who had indisputably obtained inward spiritual life.

"In 2 Corinthians 12:13 we read: 'In one Spirit we all were baptized into one body, . . . and all were made to drink one Spirit.' This refers probably to baptism by water. For we here have no suggestion of any other than the ordinary meaning of the word *baptize*. St. Paul is speaking of the Church which is the *body* of Christ, and of the Holy *Spirit*, who is its animating principle. By baptism his readers entered the Church, and were thus united to the body of Christ. And by faith, of which their baptism was a confession, they obtained (Galatians 3:2) the gift of the Spirit. Consequently, to St. Paul's thought, the outward condition, and the inward Source, of the new life were closely associated: 'In one Spirit they were baptized into one body.' Similarly in John 3:5 we have a birth 'of water and Spirit.' So in Acts 2:38 we read: 'Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' On the other hand, St. Paul never uses the phrase, 'Baptize with the Holy Spirit,' found in Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5. If our exposition be correct, we have in 1 Corinthians 12:13 a definite reference to baptism as the outward and visible gate into the Church and into the company of those savingly joined to each other and to Christ."

The Rev. F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, England, was perhaps the greatest preacher of the 19th Century, if not, indeed, the greatest

MODERN TESTIMONIES

in the history of the Church. He was what is known in England as an *evangelical* clergyman, and his sermon on Baptism is an effort to steer between the two extremes of Baptismal Regeneration, on one hand, and the non-essentiality of baptism, on the other. He has certainly given us a striking and impressive statement of the case though his position is, in some respects, open to criticism. He says:

“If baptism is only the public recognition and symbol of a fact, is not baptism degraded and made superfluous?

“Baptism is given as a something to rest upon; nay, as a something without which redemption would soon become unreal—which converts a doctrine into a reality—which realizes visibly what is invisible.

“For our nature is such that immaterial truths are unreal to us until they are embodied in material form. Form almost gives them reality and being. For instance, time is an eternal fact. But time only exists to our conceptions as an actuality by measurements of materialism. When God created the sun and moon and stars to serve for ‘signs and for seasons, and for days and years,’ he was actually, so far as man was concerned, creating time. Our minds would be only floating in an eternal Now, if it were not for symbolical successions which represent the processes of thought. The clock in the house is almost a fresh creation. It realizes. The gliding heavens, and the seasons, and the ticking clock—what is time to us without them? Nothing.

“God’s character, again, nay, God himself, *to us* would be nothing if it were not for the Creation, which is the great symbol and sacrament of his presence. If there were no light, no sunline, no sea, no national and domestic life, no material witness of his being, God would be to us

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

as good as lost. The Creation *gives* us God: forever real in himself, by Creation he becomes a fact to *us*.

"It is in virtue, again, of this necessity in man for an outward symbol to realize an invisible idea, that a bit of torn and blackened rag hanging from a fortress, or the taffrail of a ship, is a kind of life to iron-hearted men. Why is it that in the heat of battle there is one spot where the sabres flash most rapidly, and the pistols' ring is quicker, and men and officers close in most densely, and all are gathered round one man, round whose body that tattered silk is wound, and held with the tenacity of a death-struggle? Are they only children fighting for a bit of rag? That flag is everything to them: their regiment, their country, their honor, their life; yet it is *only* a symbol. Are symbols nothing?

"In the same way, baptism is a fact for man to rest upon; a doctrine realized to flesh and blood; a something in eternity which has no place in time brought down to such time expressions as 'then and there.'

"Baptism is seen to be no mere superfluity when you remember that it is an authoritative symbol. Draw the distinction between an arbitrary symbol and an authoritative one—for this difference is everything.

"I take once again the illustration of the coronation act. Coronation places the crown on the brow of one who *is* sovereign. It does not make the fact, it witnesses it. Is coronation therefore nothing? An arbitrary symbolical act agreed on by a few friends of the sovereign would be nothing; but an act which is the solemn ratification of a country is everything. It realizes a fact scarcely till then felt to be real. Yet the fact was fact before—otherwise the coronation would be invalid. Even when the third William was crowned, there was a symbol of a previous fact—the nation's decree that he should be king; and accordingly, ever after, all is dated back to that. You talk of crown-prerogatives. You say in your loyalty you 'would bow to the crown, though it hung upon a bush.' Yet it is

MODERN TESTIMONIES

only a symbol! You only say it 'in a figure.' But that figure contains within it the royalty of England.

"In a figure the Bible speaks of baptism as you speak of coronation, as identical with that which it proclaims. It calls it regeneration. It says baptism saves. A grand figure, because it rests upon eternal fact. Call you that nothing?

"We look to the Bible to corroborate this. In the Acts of the Apostles Cornelius is baptized. On what grounds? To manufacture him into a child of God, or because he *was* the child of God? Did his baptism create the fact, or was the fact prior to his baptism, and the ground on which his baptism was valid? The history is this: St. Peter could not believe that a Gentile could be a child of God. But miraculous phenomena manifested to his astonishment that this Gentile actually *was* God's child, where-upon the argument of Peter was very natural. He has the Spirit, therefore baptism is superfluous. Nay, he has the Spirit, therefore give him the *symbol* of the Spirit. Let it be revealed to others what he is. He *is* heir to the inheritance, therefore give him the title-deeds. He *is* of royal lineage—put the crown upon his head. He *is* a child of God—baptize him. 'Who shall forbid water, seeing these have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?'

"One illustration more from the marriage ceremony, and I select this for two reasons: because it is the type in Scripture of the union between Christ and his Church, and because the Church of Rome has called it a sacrament.

"A deep truth is in that error. Rome calls it a sacrament, because it is the authoritative symbol of an invisible fact. That invisible fact is the agreement of two human beings to be one. We deny it to be a sacrament, because, though it is the symbol of an invisible fact, it is not the symbol of a spiritual fact, nor an eternal fact; no spiritual truth, but only a changeful human covenant.

"Now observe the difference between an arbitrary or conventional, and an authoritative ceremony of marriage union. There are conventional acknowledgments of that

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

agreement, ceremonies peculiar to certain districts, private pledges, betrothals. In the sight of God those are valid; they cannot be lightly broken without sin. You cannot in the courts of heaven distinguish between an oath to God and a word pledged to man. He said, 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.' Such an engagement cannot be infringed without penalty—the penalty of frivolized hearts, and that habit of changefulness of attachment which is the worst of penalties. But now, additional to that, will any one say that the marriage ceremony is superfluous—that the ring he gives his wife is nothing? It is everything. It is the authoritative ratification by a country and before God of that which before was for all purposes of earth unreal. Authoritative—therein lies the difference. Just in that authoritativeness lies the question whether the ceremony is nothing or everything.

"And yet, remember, the ceremony itself does not pretend to create the fact. It only claims to realize the fact. It admits the fact as existing previously. It bases itself upon a fact. Forasmuch as two persons have consented together, and forasmuch as a token and pledge of that in the shape of a ring has been given, therefore, only therefore, the appointed minister *pronounces* that they are what betrothal had made them already in the sight of God.

"Exactly so, the *authoritativeness* is the all in all which converts baptism from a mere ceremony into a sacrament. Baptism is not merely a conventional arrangement, exceedingly convenient, agreed on by men to remind themselves and one another that they are God's children, but valid as a legal, eternal truth, a condensed, embodied fact.

"Is this making baptism nothing? I should rather say baptism is everything. Baptism saves us."

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

BEFORE concluding this discussion it may be well to indicate a little more specifically just what the Scriptures seem to teach with respect to the design of baptism. Undoubtedly the Scriptures say much about baptism, and we cannot believe that the Holy Spirit has used words without any significance. It is, therefore, important from every point of view to have a clear conception of the meaning of one of the leading words in the great Commission which Christ gave to his apostles, and under which they were to evangelize and save the nations.

That baptism is in some sense a saving ordinance seems to be clear from not only the teachings of the Scriptures, but also from the practice of the apostles. I am not unmindful that this view is denied by some who teach that baptism was intended for the Jews only, but as regards the Gentiles they were left entirely free to be baptized or not as they might prefer. In support of this position we are referred to Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 1:17. It is assumed that this passage proves that as Paul

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

was the apostle of the Gentiles, baptism was no part of the commission under which he acted. Let us therefore carefully look at this whole matter, as it is believed not a few justify their neglect of baptism on the grounds suggested by Paul's case. The passage reads as follows:

"For Christ did not send me [only] to baptize, but [also] to declare the joyful message."

This passage has been made to run the whole gauntlet of the baptismal controversy. Can we know certainly just what the apostle means? Let us carefully consider the facts.

(1) The commission which Christ gave to his apostles just before his ascension, and which includes the ordinance of baptism, was unquestionably intended for all who should afterward preach the Gospel, as well as for all who should hear it. The commission comprehends the whole world—all nations—and every creature. Paul did not receive a different commission from this. He was simply appointed for a special *work* under this commission, and for this he received a special call. In this special call he was told what work was intended for him to do, but the manner of performing this work is not even intimated. He was to open the eyes of the Gentiles, and turn them from darkness to light, etc., etc., but he was not told how this was to be done. But Paul very

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES

well understood that the manner of doing it was in harmony with the instructions which Christ had before given to his apostles, for in this same letter to the Corinthians (15:1, *et al.*) he shows that the means which were to be used in the performance of his work was the preaching of the Gospel, and this Gospel in its facts, commands and promises was embodied in the great Commission which included the ordinance of baptism.

(2) If Paul had no commission to baptize, then he clearly transcended his authority, for he himself tells us that he did baptize (1 Cor. 1:15, 16); and let it be observed that these are not necessarily the only persons he baptized during his ministry. He is simply speaking of the Christians at *Corinth*. He might have baptized hundreds at other places, and doubtless he did baptize many. Paul thanks God that he did not baptize many of the Corinthian Church, and he immediately gives the reason for it. He does not say it is because he had received no commission to baptize, but it was because not many were able to say that they were baptized into the name of Paul, as he did not baptize many. He was simply glad that he had avoided giving an excuse to the partisans of Corinth, who were following *men* rather than Christ. And this fact alone shows the im-

portance of baptism, since it distinctly bound those who were baptized into a name to accept the Leadership of that name.

(3) Let it be observed that the whole argument of the apostle clearly shows that all these Corinthians had been baptized by some one. For if this were not the case he would not have made the reference he did to their baptism: "Were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Evidently he does not question the fact of their baptism. Indeed, it is upon the assumption of their baptism into the name of Christ that he grounds his whole argument against divisions. Hence it would appear that this Scripture, when taken together, not only does not prove that baptism may be omitted, but it distinctly emphasizes the importance of baptism, and establishes beyond the possibility of a doubt that all the Corinthian Church had been baptized, no matter by whom it had been done. It also emphasizes the importance of baptism because of the fact that the apostle seems to regard the baptism of a person into a *name* as equivalent to that person's taking the name into which he is baptized.

(4) It is probable, however, that none of the apostles did very much baptizing themselves, at least this was true of those who were prominent as speakers; and it was just as true

of Peter as of Paul. Peter has been called the apostle of the Jews, and it is assumed that baptism was a part of his commission, and that is why he told the Pentecostians to be baptized. But we are not distinctly told that Peter ever baptized anybody himself. He *commanded* Cornelius and his household to be baptized, and hence we have the right to conclude that he did not baptize them himself. Now if there is anything in this fact, it simply shows that Paul did more baptizing than Peter, for we have Paul's own testimony that he himself baptized some, while we have not a word about Peter's baptizing any. So the old notion of the Gentiles' being exempted from baptism falls to the ground.

(5) It may still be asked what is meant by the passage, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." Much depends upon the force of the contrast *not—but*. Take an example of this idiom in another place: "He that believeth on me, believeth *not* on me, *but* on him that sent me" (John 12:44). Now if this sentence be interpreted as some are wont to interpret Paul's language, then it follows that the Savior plainly contradicts himself. But his meaning is clearly this: he that believeth on me, believeth not (only) on me, but (also) on him that sent me. Now let us read

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

Paul's language in the same way: "Christ sent me not [only] to baptize, but [also] to preach the Gospel." In other words, the argument of Paul is as follows: "You Corinthians attach very great importance to certain leaders. Very well. You were not baptized into my name, and I am very glad I did not baptize many of you, lest some one should say that I baptized in my own name; and I was quite justified in not baptizing many of you, for I was not sent simply to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

Doubtless some one who was traveling with Paul did most of the baptizing, or else some who lived at Corinth did it. In this view of the matter we are justified by such commentators as Doddridge, Wells, Hackett, Barnes, etc., etc. Commenting upon the passage, Albert Barnes says: "Baptism was not his principal employment, though he had a commission in common with the others to administer the ordinance, and occasionally did it." Doddridge supposes that the administration of the ordinance was intrusted to inferiors, because it was commonly practiced by immersion, and was attended with some trouble and inconvenience. Bishop Pearce translates the passage thus: "For Christ sent me not so much to baptize as to preach the Gospel." And Adam

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES

Clark sustains the Bishop's version in the following language: "The writers of the Old and New Testaments do, almost everywhere (agreeable to their Hebrew idiom) express a preference given to one thing beyond another, by an affirmation of that which is preferred, and a negation of that which is contrary to it, and so it must be understood here; for, if St. Paul was not sent at all to baptize, he baptized without a commission; but if he were sent not only to baptize, but to preach also, or to preach rather than baptize, he did in fact discharge his duty aright."

(6) Even if it were admitted, or could be proved, that Paul did receive a separate and distinct commission from the rest of the apostles, and that his commission did not include baptism, and that he never did baptize any except those whose names he himself mentions, this fact would settle nothing as regards the importance of the ordinance of baptism, or that it is not binding upon the Gentiles. It is not enough to prove that Paul did not baptize, but it must be shown that no one else baptized amongst the Gentiles, or that the Gentile Christians were really none of them baptized. But this can never be done. On the contrary, it is easy to show that the Gentile Christians were baptized, as well as the Jewish Christians, and

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

it is not at all material whether the baptism was administered by Paul, or others whose duty was specially to do that part of the work. The primitive evangelists usually went out in couples, and it was doubtless the habit for one of these to mainly do the preaching, while the other attended to the baptizing.

(7) This passage, like many others, must be interpreted in the light of all the facts of the case. When this is done, there is not the slightest difficulty whatever. Paul simply did what he had a right to do, viz.: he refrained from baptizing when he had some one else to do this work, and in the case of the Corinthians he was glad he had exercised his privilege, as it left the Church without excuse in keeping up their partisan clamor by claiming him as their leader.

This case of the apostle suggests an important fact. As the apostles seem to have gone out in twos, it is probable that one of these generally did the preaching, while the other did the baptizing, though the baptizing might have been done by any of the local members of the Church, since in the days of the apostles clerical orders were not necessary in order to perform ministerial functions. Possibly the effectiveness of evangelistic work might be increased if this method of division of labor could

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES

be generally adopted at the present time. Anyway, the special point in the passage under consideration places emphasis upon the importance of the co-operation of different talents in the work of evangelizing the world.

CHAPTER XII.

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS.

1. *It is a fact that baptism is not a purely bodily act, but it involves the conscience, and is an act "toward God." It is transitional, and indicates the passing over from one state to that of another.*

The following passage, when fairly interpreted, will fully support the proposition under consideration:

"The antitype—baptism—doth also now save you, not a putting away of filth of flesh, but the decision of a good conscience toward God, through resurrection of Christ."
(1 Peter 3:21.)

It is purposed to briefly look at this passage from three points of view, viz.: the Critical, Exegetical and Practical. Of course the examination must be brief.

(1) *Critical.* The first thing to be determined is the meaning of *Eperootema*, which is rendered in the Authorized Version, "answer," and in the Revised Version, "interrogation." Now, neither of these versions expresses the idea of the original, though the Authorized Version comes nearer it than the Revised Version. The interrogation of a good conscience

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

simply makes no sense at all, while the *answer* of a good conscience is not a very intelligible phrase to most people. In fixing the meaning of *Eperootcema*, the difficulty has been augmented by the fact that it occurs only once in the New Testament, and only once in the Septuagint. In Daniel 4:17, the Authorized Version renders it "demand," but it is at once evident to even the English reader that there is something wrong in the translation. The passage reads as follows: "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the Holy Ones." Now *Eperootcema* translates in this passage the Aramaic *Sh'elah*, to which Gesenius gives the meaning "question," "subject of inquiry," "cause at law," "cause decided," hence "judgment" or "decision" (*Decretum*). Dr. Lange thinks the word "command" will do, but we think "decision" comes more nearly the idea of the Aramaic, as the corresponding words *Gezerah* and *Maamar* unquestionably mean decision. This being accepted, the whole passage may be rendered literally as follows: "The antitype, baptism, doth also now save you, not a putting away of filth of flesh, but the decision of a good conscience toward God, through resurrection of Jesus Christ."

(2) *Exegetical*. Taking the whole context

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

into view, it is evident that baptism saves; not in any such sense as grace saves, or faith saves, or hope saves, but in a sense nevertheless important. The conscience having been aroused by the Gospel, and the heart purified by faith, the final decision of the penitent believer is made in baptism; it is his honest decision to accept Jesus as Lord and Christ; and this decision has the force of a solemn covenant as soon as the baptism takes place. It is practically equivalent to the Roman soldier's *sacramentum*, by which he took upon himself the obligations involved in his enlistment. The *transitional* force of baptism is not only indicated in the reference to the salvation of Noah and his family, but also in the phrase "*toward God.*" The water of the flood separated Noah and his family from the old sin-stricken world, and translated them into a new state. Now, baptism is the antitype of this water; that is, stands instead of it; or is related to us as regards our salvation as the water of the flood was related to Noah's salvation, in so far as the idea of transition is concerned. Our baptism is "toward God, through the resurrection of Christ." It is, therefore, practically renouncing the world, formally burying the old man, and rising to walk a new life through the power of Christ's resurrection, thus assuming

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

the obligations of the Christian's state as indicated in the phrase, "Decision of a good conscience toward God."

(3) *Practical.* The practical aspects of this question are very great. All workers in inquiry rooms will bear testimony to the difficulty of bringing penitent inquirers to anything like a definite decision as to God. But does not this difficulty grow out of the substitution of modern methods for that which was commanded by Christ, and constantly insisted upon by his divinely commissioned apostles? Any one who will carefully read the Book of Acts cannot fail to see that baptism was used very differently by the apostles to what it is now. It was then the deciding act by which the penitent believer took up his allegiance to Christ; it was "toward God," and consequently it was practically renouncing the old state of sin and entering covenant relations with the New Master. Hence it always followed closely after conviction. Just as soon as the people cried out, they were told what to do, and baptism was included in the directions, as it was practically the *sacramentum*, or pledge, as well as the decision of those who were seeking to be enrolled in the army of the faithful.

And this fact presents a question which our modern evangelists might do well to consider.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

Without raising any discussion just now as to what is called the *mode* of baptism, is it not true that the primitive place of the ordinance has practically been ignored by modern man-made methods, which methods serve only to confuse and often finally disgust the honest inquirer? He seeks for peace, and is told to believe in Christ, but when he is conscious that he does most sincerely believe, he still finds that he has taken no decisive step by which he assumes the obligations of the divine life, and it frequently happens that he cannot be made to realize that he has passed from death unto life. The reason for this is, he has not been directed according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Hence, it may be safely affirmed that infant sprinkling has robbed baptism of its practical import, and has thereby taken away from the evangelist one of his *most efficient* means for dealing with the unconverted. Baptism, when scripturally administered, is of the greatest practical importance. It is not, therefore, an arbitrary ordinance, commanded by divine authority without any special use or significance; but it has a far-reaching spiritual meaning, and, as such, cannot be dispensed with or perverted without great injury to the work of saving souls.

The position of baptism, when considered in

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

the light of our exposition, is made to occupy an importance which cannot be ascribed to it by any or all of the commonly accepted views. Our view involves the following:

(1) Baptism is a covenant, and is equivalent to the Roman soldier's oath of enlistment. In baptism the penitent believer assumes all the obligations of the divine life, and pledges himself to become an obedient follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Baptism becomes the act which separates between the old and new man, just as the waters of the flood separated between the old and new world. It, therefore, marks a change of state. Faith and repentance are necessary prerequisites, but in baptism the penitent believer distinctly, definitely and formally passes over from the old state of condemnation to that of reconciliation or acceptance with God.

(3) The main significance of our exposition will be found in the spiritual aspect of baptism which it emphasizes. Baptism is not a mere bodily act; it reaches back to the conscience, and looks forward "toward God." From the human side it proceeds from the conscience; from the divine side it lays hold of the resurrection of Christ. It is, therefore, when properly understood, an intensely spiritual act. This view relieves the ordinance entirely from

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

the gross conceptions which have been placed upon it by those who make too much of it as well as by those who make too little of it.

BECOMING CHILDREN OF GOD.

The transitional character of baptism is shown also in those Scriptures which mark the passage of the sinner into sonship, citizenship, etc. It is to be regretted that in seeking to escape the doctrine of baptismal regeneration a doubtful doctrine of Fatherhood and Sonship has been invented; and this furnishes another instance of how the rebound from "sacramental grace" has, in the language of Robertson, made baptism appear as nothing. In view of the evil effect of this tendency, it may be well to look at the matter somewhat carefully.

It is one of the strange features of modern biblical criticism that the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God is seriously accepted by not a few who claim to have rediscovered a great truth which has been for ages covered up in the smoke of Babylon. To be convinced that we are not overestimating the case and that the doctrine referred to is regarded as fundamental in any theology worthy of the twentieth century, one has only to read such works as Dr. Fairbairn's in many respects admirable book, entitled, "The Place of Christ in Modern The-

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

ology," and Dr. Watson's "The Mind of the Master."

Now all depends upon what is meant by Fatherhood. If what is meant is simply the fact that God, in a metaphorical sense, may be regarded as the Father of all men, then certainly this is no new discovery, for throughout all ages of the Church such a relationship has been recognized. In this sense God is called a "Shepherd," but no one would certainly reach the conclusion from this fact that men are *sheep* in any literal understanding of the term. No doubt because men are God's creation, and because he has a providential care over them, it is proper enough to regard him as potentially their Father. But this is not what is meant by Dr. Fairbairn, Dr. Watson and others, who claim that they have made a new discovery. They mean that we are God's children by virtue of an actual relationship which we sustain to God as a child sustains to its natural father. In other words, these able critics, to use Dr. Fairbairn's own language, contend that God is Father of all men, not in a merely figurative, but in as real a sense as any that can be imagined. He says, "Fatherhood did not come through creation, but rather creation because of Fatherhood." Dr. Watson does not accept the notion that God's Fatherhood expresses a physical re-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

lationship, but only a relationship which is ethical. Now this is making matters worse. Undoubtedly all men do not occupy the right ethical relationship towards God, but if sonship depends upon this, then it is simply certain that the Fatherhood of God can not be universal in the ethical sense. Yet this is the only sense in which it would be proper to say that anyone is a child of God.

When we come to study carefully the Scriptures it is not difficult to determine that they, at least, do not teach an ethical universal sonship. Indeed, there are passages which clearly slap this notion squarely in the face. We might quote many of these, but one will suffice our present purpose. Certain of the Jews, disputing, said to him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." The reply of Jesus is very significant. He said, "If God were your Father you would love me"; and he afterwards adds, "Ye are of your Father the Devil." Now here are persons whom Jesus practically declares are not God's children, and as if to make his statement doubly strong he clinches it by affirming that their Father is the Devil. It would be difficult, we think, to find a passage more explicit than this on any question of importance. Undoubtedly the whole relationship discussed in these statements of

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

Christ is purely ethical, and that is precisely the way in which the Fatherhood of God is always regarded when it is discussed in reference to his children.

Certainly no one can claim to be a child of God in precisely the same sense that Jesus was. This being conceded, then there are only two other ways in which God can be regarded as Father. One is in the metaphorical sense to which reference has already been made, and the other the ethical sense, which we believe is exactly the point of view from which our divine Lord views the matter whenever he refers to it at all.

But we are curious to know how this last view may be regarded as anything new. It has certainly been the doctrine of Christian teachers throughout all ages of the Church; and all the talk about the Fatherhood of God being a contribution of the latter part of the nineteenth century to theology has really no foundation in fact. There are philosophical reasons against the notion that God must be regarded as the Father of the race in the sense of the relation between father and child, but we can do little more than hint at these reasons now. A single thought will be sufficiently suggestive to the reader. If the notion should be maintained then evidently every man would have to regard

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

himself as having two fathers in practically the same sense. But this is not the way God talks to his creatures. However, it is very beautifully true that God uses the relation between father and child to illustrate and enforce the ethical relation which he sustains to all those who are his children. Hence we are told that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

We are now prepared to examine one or two of those passages which bear upon the subject under consideration. In order to be as brief as possible the examination will be confined mainly to the question of sonship, though an argument equally conclusive can be made with respect to citizenship and other relations.

A crucial passage is John I. 11, 12: "He came unto His own country, and His own people did not receive Him home. As many, however, as did receive Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to those that were believing on His name."

The point to be considered is the meaning of the word "become." The Greek is *genesthai*, 2 Aor. Inf., and is from *ginomai*. The corresponding Latin is *Fieri*, the German *Werden* and the French *d'être faits*. Now there are few words of more general use than *ginomai*. It has several meanings, but all of these in some way relate

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

to the primary meaning, which is, to come into existence, be created, exist by creation; but it never, so far as I can find, has a signification that will justify the notion that it represents entering into the conscious enjoyment of something that was already ours. Nevertheless this latter view is very generally entertained by those who believe that all men are now the children of God, whether they are Christians or not.

Undoubtedly the text under consideration is crucial with respect to the question of divine Sonship; and this question may be stated briefly as follows: Are men sons of God without adoption, or have they forfeited their divine relationship by reason of sin, and must they now be born again before they can become children of God? The text before us seems to imply that faith gives the *right to become* children of God, but even it in itself does not *constitute* them children. Surely we do not become that which we are already; or to put it in other words, we do not enter into a state if we are in it. The notion, then, that we are children of God before regeneration and adoption seems to be not only contrary to Scripture but also contrary to human reason. But we are told that we are children of God by creation, and though like the prodigal we have

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

wandered from our Father's house, we are still his children and he is still our Father. Now, as a matter of fact it would be difficult to prove that the relation of Father and child between God and man was ever recognized under the old dispensations. It is true that Paul at Athens speaks of man as the "offspring" of God, but in this he uses the language of poetry, and it really proves nothing more than that man is the creation of God. This is admitted without question; but if this fact proves that men are children of God, by a parity of reasoning it would be easy to show that animals are his children, since he created them also. Of course this reasoning does not imply that there is no difference between animals and men. The point is simply as to relationship.

That man is the creature of God no one will dispute, but that he ever was his child, in the true meaning of the word, may well be questioned. At the same time I do not care to dispute the contention of those who hold to his original sonship. What I claim is that in his present lost condition he is without God and without hope in the world, an alien and a stranger, outside of the covenant and wholly unworthy to be called a child. In short he must become a child through the grace of God before it is possible for him to claim divine

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

sonship. All this seems to be clearly set forth in the text under consideration. Hence those who contend for the divine Fatherhood of the race do not properly distinguish between what is understood by natural birth, or birth into the kingdom of nature, and spiritual birth, or birth into the kingdom of grace. In one we are God's offspring, but have lost our inheritance, lost our birthright; and consequently a new birth is necessary, and in this we are constituted children of God by adoption. Having forfeited our birthright we are no longer children until we *become* such by the means which God has provided in the gospel scheme.

In order to arrive at the whole truth in this matter we must not confine ourselves simply to the family idea. That is only one phase of the question. The fact of our new state is set forth under various figures. The lost world is represented in the Scriptures as under the dominion of Satan, as belonging to his kingdom, and Christians are regarded as having been translated from this kingdom into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In every instance where the change is referred to the idea of transition is always prominent. It is from one kingdom to another, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, from death to life, from a state of alienation to a state of reconciliation,

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

from the old man to the new man, from condemnation to justification, etc., etc. Hence the relationship of father and child is only one way of expressing what follows in the new creation in Christ Jesus. But this relationship is dependent upon faith which gives the *right* to become children. The whole change is fully set forth in Gal. III. 26-29. In this Scripture it is clearly implied that we become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and that this faith is manifested by actually putting on Christ in baptism. The idea of transition is evidently clearly shown in this passage, and this is precisely what is shown in the text which we have had under consideration. In this text faith gives the right to take the important step which will constitute the believer a child of God. He does not become a child by the simple exercise of faith, but this faith gives him the right or privilege to enter into definite, covenant relationship by an act of obedience, which is the transition act between alienation and reconciliation. Hence if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, and as many as have been baptized into Christ have put away the old and have entered upon the new. In this way is that relationship of Fatherhood and Sonship established which is recognized in the Scriptures; and in this case baptism distinctly marks the transition which

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

takes place. Nor does this interpretation have the slightest leaning towards baptismal regeneration. Nevertheless it makes baptism an important factor in the plan of salvation, and thus saves it from the degraded position to which it has been reduced by those who make too little of it. As faith must precede the baptism, in becoming children of God, of course baptismal regeneration is at once cut off; and as baptism is seen to perform an important function, it is equally true that all talk about baptism being a non-essential is entirely without justification.

Such at least is the conclusion to which I am forced after a candid consideration of what seems to be the general trend of the Scriptures. I am not unmindful of what will be said by some in reply to the points I have made. No doubt, among other things, I will be told that Christ taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven." But this was said to his *disciples*, and it is by no means certain that any one else has a right to appropriate what the language implies. Still, there may be a sense in which it is proper to recognize all men as God's erring children, but this view certainly is not very clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, even if such a view can be fairly established, it is still true that only those who believe and obey the Gospel are reconciled,

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

adopted, saved; and consequently there is certainly no need to maintain a position which, to say the least, is of doubtful interpretation, and is certainly misleading to many as respects its special bearing upon the salvation of the race. The case of the prodigal son can not be legitimately used to establish the contention implied in the universal Fatherhood of God, as it is usually set forth by those who teach that notion.

2. *It is a fact that baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ, and this connects it with the only source of salvation.*

Let us study carefully the following passage: "And Peter said to them: Repent and be baptized, each one of you, upon the name of Jesus Christ, in order to the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 38).

There are at least two extreme views with respect to this passage, and these both have a bad influence on the practical results of evangelistic labor. One view makes *too much* of baptism, teaching in effect the doctrine of "Baptismal Regeneration," while the other makes *too little* of baptism, and consequently this fine saying of Peter is very seldom if ever used in the ministry of those who hold this view. Indeed, it is believed that not many preachers of the evangelical sort ever

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

quote this passage in these beginning days of the twentieth century.

Now, why is this? Has the passage ceased to possess any binding force as an authoritative declaration of the Holy Spirit? Is it no longer to be consulted when seeking to know the Divine way of dealing with earnest inquirers? I ask these questions because I have a notion that the passage has special importance in determining the way of salvation. Not that it settles everything. Not that it even settles anything without the concurrent evidence of other Scripture. But if the most obvious interpretation of this text not only does not contradict other parts of the Word of God, but is really supported by the whole tenor of Divine teaching, then we should certainly be slow to neglect it in our preaching, and especially in instructing earnest inquirers. It seems to me its importance is emphasized in the light of the facts in which it stands. It is the first deliverance of the Holy Spirit's teaching after the fulfilment of the promise which our Lord made to his disciples. The disciples were commanded to "tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high." At Pentecost they received that power, and Peter, the very person who had been specially chosen to open the new kingdom, is the speaker. He preaches a most

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

remarkable sermon, concluding with a splendid climax: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Never was there a finer summary of the gospel facts than this. Jesus, the historical name, is here; Christ crucified is here; Christ the anointed One is here; and the Lord, the One having all authority in heaven and earth, is here. What more was needed so far as faith was concerned? The people had clearly set before them the Lord Jesus Christ, embracing everything that was necessary to be addressed to their faith. No wonder they cried out: "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Peter's answer was: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, upon the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 38).

Now, it may be well to notice the order in which the Apostle places the various items in this text. The inquirers were told to "repent and be baptized." They were deeply moved by Peter's sermon—so much so that they were pricked to the heart, and cried out. Surely here was real conviction. Consequently the Apostle does not tell them they must believe—they, doubtless, already had sufficient faith to obey Peter's command; and so he just told them what

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

to do, and then exhorted them to do it. And the promise was that, following their obedience, they were to receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, can there be any reasonable doubt that this is the order in which the items stand related? Of course, much depends upon the force of the preposition *eis* which in the Authorized Version is translated "for." And we think it will help us to determine the exact meaning of *eis* here, if we consider the whole phrase, *eis aphesin hamartioon*, "for the remission of sins." The phrase only occurs in three other places, viz., Matt. 26: 28; Mark 1: 4; Luke 3: 3. Hence four occurrences exhaust the New Testament use of *eis aphesin hamartioon*, rendered in the Authorized Version uniformly "for the remission of sins," and in the Revised Version "unto the remission of sins." Now if we can certainly determine the force of *eis* in the phrase as found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, we think there is no doubt that it should have the same force in Acts 2: 38. In Matt. 26: 28, it cannot have a retrospective significance, since it is impossible to suppose that Jesus shed his blood *because* the sins of the world were pardoned. And it is just as evident that John did not preach the baptism of repentance *because* the sins of the people were pardoned, but *in order to* remission (Mark

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

1: 4; Luke 3: 3). Now as the force of *eis* is unmistakably prospective in all the other occurrences of the phrase, it must have the same force in the passage under consideration, unless there are good and valid reasons why the uniformity of meaning should be broken. No such reasons, I feel sure, can be given. On the contrary, there is strong corroborative evidence that the Pentecostians did not have their sins pardoned when Peter told them to "repent and be baptized." It is altogether improbable that he would have told them to repent *because their sins were pardoned*. Nor is it possible to suppose that their inquiry is the language of sins forgiven. They had been charged, only a few moments before, with crucifying the innocent Jesus. Surely they were not such characters as could expect the remission of sins without sincere repentance. But baptism is placed between the repentance and the remission of sins which was promised, and consequently, it cannot be said that they were to be baptized because of remission of sins any more than it can be said they were to repent because their sins were remitted. Hence we conclude that every rule of fair exegesis compels us to recognize the fact that Peter told these Pentecostians to repent and be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ *in order to* the remission of sins.

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

But, it may be asked, how can this interpretation be made to harmonize with many passages which do not mention repentance and baptism as in any way connected with remission of sins? Let us just here state a canon of criticism which is most important in this discussion. *When the Scriptures promise a blessing, that blessing may depend upon more, but can never depend upon less, than the conditions expressed in any given case.* For instance, when salvation is promised to any one who calls upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10: 13), it is evident that nothing short of this calling will meet the case; but no one would seriously contend that calling upon the name of the Lord entirely exhausts all that is required in order to salvation. Precisely so is it as regards faith. Whenever the Scriptures state this as the condition of salvation, and mention nothing else, it should be remembered that salvation cannot be predicated without this faith, but it does not follow that no other conditions are understood, because they are not specifically stated in the particular case referred to. Surely the command to believe does not exclude repentance, calling on the name of the Lord, confession of Christ, etc. And if it does not exclude these, why is it essential to suppose that it necessarily excludes baptism? I demur to that

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

method of reasoning which leaves the word of God in hopeless confusion.

But we are told that remission of sins is promised to faith as the only condition, and Acts 10: 43 is quoted in proof. Now it is not stated here that this faith is the only condition. Undoubtedly remission cannot depend on less than this, but it may depend on more. It is not even said that whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins, without adding "THROUGH HIS NAME." This important phrase is often overlooked, as if it were not in the text. The believer receives remission of sins THROUGH HIS NAME. Let us put this statement by the side of Acts 2: 38: "Repent and be baptized every one of you upon the NAME of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," etc., and we readily see how the believing penitent receives remission of sins through his NAME. Evidently baptism brings him to that NAME whereby we are said to be saved. (Acts 4: 12.) It is furthermore evident that there is no antagonism between these two passages. Acts 2: 38 is in perfect harmony with Acts 10: 43. One is really the explanation of the other, because a fuller statement of practically the same thing. Hence we should not allow some foolishly extreme sacramental notions of baptism to crowd this divine ordinance out of

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

its proper place. What is generally understood by Baptismal Regeneration is a dangerous heresy, and should be earnestly repudiated by all Christians, but repentance and baptism upon the name of Jesus Christ are in order to the remission of sins. At least that is what the Apostle Peter taught at Pentecost, and we have already seen that he taught practically the same thing at the house of Cornelius. Not only did he tell these Gentiles that "*through his name*, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," but he concludes by "commanding them to be baptized in *the name of the Lord.*" Surely nothing could be clearer than the teaching of Peter on this subject. Is his teaching authoritative now? If not, why not? But if it is, what becomes of many modern methods of evangelizing?

There remains but one other point to be noticed, and that is necessary to meet the first extreme to which attention has been called. What is the force of *epi too anomati Iasou Christou*? This I have translated: "Upon the name of Jesus Christ." Now what does this mean? Does it not signify clearly that whatever efficacy there may be in baptism is derived wholly from the name of Jesus Christ? The baptism which Peter demanded was grounded upon the all-prevailing NAME—the only name by which any-

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

one can be saved. Hence all who were baptized at Pentecost would understand that their whole reliance for remission of sins rested upon the name of Jesus Christ. They did not trust in the water, nor even in the act of baptism; but they were baptized, relying upon the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and the value of baptism was chiefly owing to the fact that it placed these penitent believers in contact with the name in which all redeeming power is concentrated. Upon this name they based their trust, as it alone possessed the potent charm to put away sins.

This view of the matter does not in the slightest degree change the chronological order. It still leaves baptism a condition precedent to remission of sins; but it does change the emphasis from the baptism to the name from which baptism receives all its real significance. This, I think, is a gain to the cause of truth; and if I am justified in this conclusion, it seems to me a legitimate accentuation of the right word or phrase is the only thing that is necessary to redeem this passage from the extremes to which it has been subjected, and restore it to its rightful authority in directing inquiring souls in the way of salvation.

3. *It is a fact that baptism is the key stone which*

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

locks together some of the most important things connected with salvation.

Baptism is joined to the death of Christ—(Rom. 6: 3); it is joined to the burial of Christ—(Rom. 6: 4); it is also joined to the resurrection of Christ—(Col. 2: 12). These are what are usually called the facts of the gospel, and when stated in the language of the inspired record, they furnish the foundation of everything in Christianity. Baptism is joined to the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, (Matt. 28: 19). It is also joined to Faith, Repentance and Confession (Mark 16: 16, Acts 2: 38; Acts 8: 37). Finally it is joined to remission of sins, gifts of the Holy Spirit and adoption into the family of God (Acts 2: 38; Gal. 3: 26, 27).

Thus it will be seen that baptism has *under* it the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; *over* it the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; *before* it faith, repentance and confession; *following* it remission of sins, gift of the Holy Spirit and children of God. In short, baptism is the key stone which binds all these together. We have here twelve most important things all joined to one another by a scriptural baptism which forms a common center around which all these different parts of the gospel—the facts, conditions, sanctions and promises—

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

are grouped, and without which the symmetry of the whole would be broken, and consequently the scheme of redemption left in utter confusion. This being true, it is surely wisdom to say, "what God has joined together, that let no one put asunder."

Perhaps the chief mistake which has been made, as regards the meaning of baptism, is that it stands for *only one thing*, whereas it is rather the connecting link for *many things*. It is the *place where* all the elements of the gospel meet, where they all coalesce, and thereby become harmoniously co-operative in the plan of salvation. Hence, while baptism doubtless has a significance all its own, it seems to me its chief office is to bring all the different parts of the gospel into practical union in one great overt act of obedience.

We may now easily account for the variety of views with respect to the design of baptism. As already intimated, it is *the place where* the facts, commands, sanctions and blessings of the gospel normally meet—where the divine and human sides of salvation are brought together in orderly co-operation. But as baptism is joined to so many things, and as the human mind is prone to seize upon one thing only at a time, and that always the one thing most agreeable to preconceived opinions, it follows that it is

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

not difficult to understand how there exists so much confusion upon a subject which is as clear as sunlight when we once occupy the proper standpoint with respect to it.

It is a well known fact that if a ray of light is passed through a prism and thrown on a screen, the ray will be divided into seven different colors. It is also known that if these colors are painted on a wheel in their proper proportions, and then the wheel is turned rapidly, the colors will all blend and make what we call white light. Just so with baptism. It may be regarded as the wheel by the action of which all the elements of the gospel are blended into the clear light of salvation. Without the action of this wheel these elements remain in separate parts, and while in this state of separation they are often treated by theologians as if they actually contradict one another. But this is mainly for the reason that these elements are considered separately, as if each one was, in itself, the whole of the plan of salvation. But we must remember that, as in the case of light, all the colors are necessary and each color must be in its legitimate place and in its right proportion, in order to produce perfect light, so must all the elements of the gospel be included in their normal places and proportions in order to give us the perfect

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

plan of salvation. An undue emphasis upon any part, or the leaving out of a part, would at once destroy the harmony of the whole, and in some cases might endanger the efficacy of the plan.

SALVATION ASCRIBED TO SEVERAL THINGS.

As has already been stated, there are a number of instrumentalities employed in the salvation of the sinner, and the Bible clearly recognizes these instrumentalities. We are not said to be saved by any one thing alone, but by a number of things in co-operation. The Scriptures clearly teach that God saves us, and that we are begotten of God; also, that the grace of God saves us, etc. But would it be legitimate to conclude from these statements of Scripture that nothing else has to do with our salvation? Surely we would not wish to exclude the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit because the Scriptures ascribe salvation, first of all, to the love of the Divine Father. How, then, are we to understand the matter? I think there is no difficulty in the case whatever. Evidently, when the Scriptures ascribe salvation to any *particular* person or thing, they do not necessarily *exclude* other persons or things which may be mentioned in the same connection or in other parts of the Word of God.

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

The scriptural method is very natural and very simple. It depends upon the point of view from which the Divine writer is contemplating the subject as to the agency or instrumentality he may name. If he is aiming to emphasize the originating or moving cause of our salvation, he will unquestionably call attention to the love of God and the grace of God. But if he wishes to direct special attention to the procuring cause of our salvation, he will dwell upon the great sacrifice for sin and uncleanness which Christ made upon the Cross, and he will rightfully call attention to the fact that it is through His blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. But if the point of view occupied by the Divine writer is the work of the Holy Spirit, then we are told that no one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit. Now there is no contradiction in this method. Everything depends upon the *standpoint* from which the subject is considered. But we may make contradiction by refusing to *move* the standpoint, and thus attempt to confine salvation to *one* thing when, in fact, the Divine Spirit has ascribed it to many.

Turning now to the human side, we find the Scriptures still adopt the same method as when considering the Divine side. Men are

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

told to do certain things, and as they do each one of these they are said to be saved. And certainly, each one of these, considered from the human side, does save, but not all in the same sense, nor in the sense in which we are saved by Divine power or agency. But these human acts save us, nevertheless, in *some* sense, or else the Bible would not say so. As an illustration, let us look for a moment at faith. Now the Scriptures clearly say that faith saves us. But in one sense faith does not save us at all, for in *that* sense Christ *alone* can save us. But is there really any such thing as scriptural faith without Christ? There must be the object of faith before faith can be exercised at all, and as Christ is the object of our faith, we cannot believe scripturally without resting our faith on Him. So, then, really there is no such thing as considering faith apart from Christ. Just so of calling on the name of the Lord. How can we call on Him in whom we have not believed, and how can we believe in Him of whom we have not heard? Nevertheless it is plainly stated that "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But if we are saved by faith *alone*, then surely calling on the name of the Lord can have nothing to do with our salvation. But we have already seen that faith alone is really

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

no faith at all, or, as James says, a dead faith. The same is true of calling upon the name of the Lord. We are not saved by simply calling, but by calling *on the name of the Lord*. The Scriptures clearly state that Baptism saves us. (1 Peter iii. 21.) But in what *sense* does Baptism save us? Certainly not in the *same* sense in which we are to understand that God saves us, or Christ saves us, or the Holy Spirit saves us, or faith saves us, or calling on the name of the Lord saves us; but nevertheless Baptism does save us in *some* sense, for the Word of God plainly says so. In what sense, then, does it save us? Evidently only as it in some way relates to Christ, for Baptism, like faith, is nothing when taken away from its legitimate association. But Baptism, like faith and calling, *is joined to Christ*, and derives all its significance from Him. Without Him it is nothing, with Him it has its proper place. It is believed that place is the one which has already been assigned to it. It can amount to nothing whatever if it is considered simply as a human act without any Divine association. It must be "towards God by the resurrection of Christ." It must be associated with the other things that are comprehended in the plan of salvation. Scriptural Baptism, therefore, cannot be a mere physical or mechanical act, but

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

it has a deeply impressive spiritual significance, which at once attaches to it very great importance. The phrases "baptized into Christ," "baptized into His death," clearly indicate the significance which we are now claiming for Baptism. Baptism is not efficacious of itself in our salvation, nor is faith, nor repentance, nor calling on the name of the Lord, but all of these are things which we must do in order that we may lay hold of the salvation which has been provided for us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE SCRIPTURES HARMONIZED.

It will be seen that this method of reasoning brings all the Scriptures into harmony. There is no longer even an apparent contradiction between those passages, on the one hand, which assert the sovereignty of God, and those, on the other, which assert the free agency of man. If we will carefully consider the point of view from which the subject is contemplated, we shall have no difficulty whatever in understanding that when we are said to be saved by faith, calling on the name of the Lord, Baptism, hope, or indeed any other instrumentality, considered from the human side, the *one* thing which is specially emphasized must not be regarded as *excluding any of the others men-*

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

tioned, but as only stating *one* of the things by which we are saved, because this one thing has some *special function* which is not provided for in any of the others, or even in all of them together. But when the one thing is added to all the rest of the human acts, even then the sum must be regarded as simply part of a circle which can only be completed by a union with everything which belongs to the Divine side in the plan of salvation.

Just here it is important to distinguish between the *plan* and our *obedience* to it. The former is the work of divine wisdom, and is therefore perfect; the latter is necessarily characterized by all the weakness of the human, and is therefore imperfect. Nevertheless, it is exactly at this point where much confusion prevails. Because baptism is included in the whole plan of salvation, it is assumed that no one can be saved who is not baptized. But this is certainly a *non sequitur*. It is one thing to contend for the perfect plan of salvation, and it is quite another thing to expect a perfect obedience to everything the plan requires. Doubtless this perfect obedience is the high ideal to which we should all aspire, but it does not follow that the plan itself should be marred simply because human weakness cannot always realize the ideal set before us.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

When it is affirmed therefore that baptism is a part of the plan of salvation, it is not necessarily affirmed that no one can be saved without it. Salvation may never depend upon a perfect obedience to everything that is involved in the plan. Indeed, some may be saved who never heard of the plan at all. But this in no wise invalidates the importance of whatever may be omitted in the obedience. Life does not depend upon a perfect body. One may live without an arm or a leg, but this maimed condition of the body is certainly not desirable. One may live spiritually without meeting fully all the conditions of the gospel, but surely it is no advantage to spiritual life to leave something out which divine wisdom has put into the plan. This view of the matter completely answers both those who make *too much* of baptism and also those who make *too little* of it. From this point of view Baptismal Regeneration and indifference to baptism are alike unreasonable and unscriptural; and we find that in this, as well as in other things, the old Latin proverb—*in medio tutissimus ibis*—is the true philosophy of religion as well as all other things. Our safety lies between extremes.

After all, it is not desirable to rest too much in definition. Life is too practical for finely spun theories. Action is the law of life, not

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

mere statements of what and how to do. Still, it is true that definition is necessary in order to secure a working hypothesis. Men will not labor or sacrifice without some definite object in view. Indefiniteness does not inspire enthusiasm, and without enthusiasm little or no progress can be made in any cause. But definition has its limitations, and these come very soon when we enter the realm of religion.

The mistake that men make is in supposing that the acceptance of certain doctrinal statements constitutes a Christian; whereas true Christianity involves the whole man, body, soul and spirit; or the intellect, the affections, and even the appetites and passions. The latter, however, are to be held in subjection to the sanctified higher spiritual nature. Orthodoxy or right thinking is, no doubt, important; for right thinking is a promising forerunner of right action. But right thinking may exist without the corresponding action.

Nevertheless, religion is more of feeling than of anything else. It is a heart service rather than a head conviction. Both of these ought to go together, and they will go together in a normally adjusted religious development. Still, the latter may exist without the former, and doubtless often does exist without it; and this is probably one reason why so much cold

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

formalism exists even where orthodoxy is supreme. A heart full of the love of God is very much better than a head full of theological subtleties. Still, we do not undervalue theological definitions, when these are kept within their proper place.

As already intimated, they have their limitations, and beyond these they must not be allowed to go. The human mind will think, and it will ask questions. The everlasting WHY is thundering into all ears. This tendency should be encouraged, rather than discouraged. It is the parent of all discovery, and therefore the fruitful source of many blessings. But blessings soon become curses when they are perverted from their legitimate use. Hence, while even speculations may be encouraged, they must not be allowed to take rank as standards of faith. It is when our definitions are elevated into Procrustean bedsteads, or tests of fellowship, or hindrances in Christian work, that they become dangerous. As long as each man formulates his own religious creed, no one ought to object, but the moment he attempts to formulate a creed for others, that moment does he step over the proper limitations of definition.

Hence we are more and more coming to the conclusion that Christian union is not possible,

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS

or even desirable, on any other basis than that of liberty to differ without the right to divide. There is room in the true Church for all legitimate variety, and this should be allowed fair play; but there is no room for the divisions which now disfigure the map of Christendom. Hence, when our definitions assume the importance of human creeds, and these creeds determine the lines of fellowship and co-operation, then no one should wonder that schism and every concomitant evil will be the result. Definitions are well enough as a scaffolding with which to help in the building of Christian character, but they are useless lumber when the house is once built. "Now abideth faith, hope, love; these three, and the greatest of these is love."

This point of view is the most favorable from which to consider the question of baptism. The main thing is to do what our Lord has commanded. We may not always clearly perceive the philosophy of the command; nor is this absolutely essential to secure the blessing promised; nevertheless if ignorance is not bliss, it is surely not folly to be wise. Consequently, the more we know of the Divine will the greater ought to be our happiness, provided we earnestly endeavor to do that will on earth as it is done in heaven. Loyalty to our

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR OF CHRISTENDOM

Sovereign King is the final test in everything that pertains to the Divine life, and this loyalty involves the whole heart whether the head clearly understands the philosophy or not of our King's commands.

OCT 27 1902

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 539 777 2